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GRACIE AND GRANT

A Story for Children



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GRACIE AND GRANT.





RACIE AND



RANT:

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"BEN AND KIT," AND "ROSE ROBIN AND LITTLE MAY."



GLASGOW:

DAVID BRYCE & SON.

1879.





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GRACIE AND GRANT.

CHAPTER I.

AN ERRAND OF LOVE.



HE village clock struck eleven. Jeanie MacLean hastened to smoothe her hair and take off her working apron, while she counted the strokes; then she turned to her mother, who was busy ironing some clothes at the kitchen table, and asked, "Could you spare me an hour this forenoon, mother?"

Mrs. MacLean looked round and set down her iron. "You want to go and see the two mitherless bairns, do you?" she said, gently. "Yes, Jeanie, you may go, and try and comfort them a wee bit. Poor little Grace will be sore at heart. But have you finished clearing up?"

"I've done everything, mother, the lobby, the doorstep, and brasses, and tidied the parlour. I've just to fetch in the vegetables for the broth and to chop them."

"I will chop them and put in the meat if you go and pull the leeks and the kail, dear. Ask the children down to take a cup of tea with you, if their father will let them. I'll have some hot scones ready by four o'clock. You need not hasten back before that; you have worked well of late, and had but little holiday."

"Thank you, mother; it will do them good to come. They are all alone, I fancy, unless Mrs. Fern from the dell is minding them; but she is such a cross, ill-tempered woman, I pity them if she is there. And I feel *so* sorry for Grace, she will fret for her mother, I fear; she is unlike other wee girls, so much more thoughtful. I'll run to the garden for the vegetables now, so as to be over early for the children."

Jeanie lifted the pot on the fire for her mother, and then went out of the back door to a small plot of ground they called their garden. It was divided down the middle by a little path; on one side was a piece of green on which they bleached their linen, on the other a small piece of ground for vegetables, with a hedge beyond.

Jeanie stepped carefully across the wet grass, for it was a very showery day in April, and the rain had been falling briskly a few minutes before, though now the sun shone out brightly and lighted up the rain drops on the hedge till they glittered like diamonds. She plucked off a handful of the fresh, green, curly-looking kail, and pulled up a leek or two, then returning by a little footpath next the hedge, she stopped a moment to look at a branch covered with little green buds; on each bud was a raindrop.

"How beautiful it is to see the buds come out

in the spring," thought Jeanie. "It seems so refreshing after the long dull winter, just as when one is very thirsty and gets a drink of cold fresh water. It is a delightful thing to be alive, I think, amongst the birds and flowers. The white thorn will soon be here, and then the wild rose, and the bluebell, and the heather," and Jeanie's spirits rose at the thought. "You dear little buds," she said, joyfully, "you make me very happy when I come and pay you a visit; go on growing and bursting forth till you end in a cluster of white thorn;" then, more gently, she added, "and it is sweet to me to think, 'My God and Father made every one of you.' He is so good and gracious to surround us with such pretty things. I wish I could please Him better." Then Jeanie began to sing on her way back,—

" Father of eternal grace,
Glorify Thyself in me;
Meekly beaming in my face,
May the world Thine image see."

It was a very beaming face that met her mother's eye upon her return to the cottage, and a very sweet face her mother thought; the clear brown eyes beamed with happiness, a happiness which found its source above, and her cheeks were brilliant, for the early morning air had given them a fresh sweet colour. Upon her lips was a glad smile—glad because of the happy thought of a Father's love which had arisen in her heart, and quiet, too, because of the prayer which had only just passed her lips.

Mrs. MacLean took Jeanie's little shawl from the peg and pinned it round her shoulders, and

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reaching down her hat gave it into her hand. "Don't hasten back, lassie, you've worked well of late, take a little holiday, and if you can help Grace a bit, do; I shall miss you, and be glad to have my cheerie little companion back. I like to hear your voice singing about, but I am glad to spare you on an errand of love.

"'The Book' says it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. Let your light shine, Jeanie, and speak to the little ones of the love of the Good Shepherd. They don't know much about it, I'm fearing. Their mother spoke but little of these things, though I believe they were in her heart. They should be *first*, not buried deep down with many a care on the top. Here, take this little black handkerchief to Gracie, I've had it laid by many a day. I canna help thinking of her poor mother's last words to me, 'Speak a kind word to my bairns sometimes.' I wish I could do more for them. Who would not be kind to a mitherless bairn?" and a large tear fell down from her eyes as she spoke.



CHAPTER II.

GRACE IN TROUBLE.



JEANIE had a pleasant walk before her as long as the sun shone and the rain kept off. Her mother's cottage with two others stood at the foot of a hill which was not very steep, but thickly wooded on either side, and when she reached the top a very pretty view lay before her. High mountains were on the one side, their peaks rising up one behind the other, with ever varying lights and shadows. Then the loch, stretching away at their base; oh, it was lovely! When the summer's sun shone upon it on a calm quiet day, Jeanie thought it looked like a sea of glass. Far away in the distance, right before her, were mountains again. The shadows of the clouds were resting heavily here and there, while streaks of sunlight showed them to be thickly wooded at their base, and caused a beautiful cascade to be plainly discernible. At the foot of the hill was a wood through which the road ran. The first part

of it was railed in, being private property; then for about a quarter of a mile it was left open on either side for the passer-by to ramble beneath the trees, amongst the bushes and brakes, and beside the rivulets if he choose. Wild flowers grew here in abundance, and the birds built their nests in the tall trees free from disturbance. It was a lonely path on a winter's night, but lovely on a hot summer's day, or in the beautiful spring time. Jeanie passed along delighting in sweet fresh little buds everywhere bursting forth. At the edge of the wood stood two cottages, and towards one of these she turned. They stood a little back from the beaten path, shaded by the trees on one side. On the other was a piece of garden ground railed in by a light fence, and used for growing vegetables and a few flowers. A bench was placed against the cottage wall on the sheltered side, and there with her pinafore thrown over her face, and her hands pressed over her pinafore, sat a little girl of about ten years: she wore a dark stuff frock, and dark grey stockings, and to-day, because it was an uncommon day, an uncommonly *sad* day, a pair of thick boots. She was moving very gently backwards and forwards, with her little feet crossed, and her curly hair blowing about in the wind.

"Grace," cried Jeanie, softly.

Down came the pinafore, the curls were pushed hastily back, and with half a laugh, half a sob, the little girl answered, "O Jeanie!" She needed not to say she was glad to see her friend, the quick bright colour that spread over her face, and the light in her blue eye told that plainly enough, as she sprang forward and took Jeanie's hand;

then, as if surprised at herself for her eagerness, and remembering some recent trouble, the light left her face and large tears rolled down her cheeks. "Why were you sitting here all alone, dear, with your pinny over your head, and what's troubling you, Grace?"

"I was covering up my face, and trying to *forget*—and trying to *remember*—to remember mother," and at this word came a burst of sobs. "To remember how she looked at me, Jeanie, and told me to be kind to Grant, and take care of him; and I have tried, and he is gone—run away, I think, because Mrs. Fern was so hard on him."

"Stop crying, Gracie, and tell me all about it; perhaps I can help you a bit. I have come to try and help you. I think our Father sent me, Gracie. He always sends the help at the right time. There is no trouble so bad but what He can steer us right through."

Gracie stopped her deep sobs, and looked up through her tears. "I *am* so glad you're come, Jeanie; you *are* good—I love you, and I haven't got *many* people to love now." The sobs began again.

"What was it all about? Shall we go into the house?" asked Jeanie, drawing her close.

"No, I cannot go there, she drove me out; I'm not cold. Let's sit and watch for Grant, he *may* come back. She called him 'Gruff,' and he cannot bear that."

"Who?"

"Oh! Mrs. Fern. She has been cross all day. She has come for a few hours, till father comes home, to clean up. To-morrow mother is to be bur—ried." Grace could get no further, and both hands went up again.

"I know, dear; but what has made you unhappy to-day?" asked Jeanie, tenderly stroking her head.

"Well," answered the child, with a great effort, looking eagerly round, "Grant got in Mrs. Fern's way when she was busy, and he spilled milk on the clean floor, and she was cross with him, and pushed him about, and then he got angry, and she put him out in the back yard (very roughly, Jeanie), and called him 'a stupid laddie,' and he lifted a stone and threw it at her. He didn't mean she should see—it was just as she was turning to shut the door—but it struck the wrong place, the verra window where mother is lying, and cracked it; and Mrs. Fern heard it, and she turned and caught him by the collar and dragged him in, and his coat tore (its his best, Jeanie), and oh, he *was* in a passion; you know how Grant looks in a passion—all red, and his eyes bright, and he struck her and said *she* did it, and she said no, *he* did (tore the coat), and then he jumped through the door and away into the wood. I told her she was cruel to treat Grant so, that mother always loved him, and helped him to be good. But she said there was no good in him, he'd come to bad, that his name should be Gruff not Grant, and I answered her, and said she would *make* him bad, and she told me to go out after him; so I came."

"He is most likely in the wood not far off; he will come home when she is gone, Grace, don't fear. How long does Mrs. Fern stay?"

"Oh, she wants to go home just now, Jeanie, she is angry father is so long away, but how *could* she do so with mother lying there? I think

Grant *will* be sorry he got so angry. And do you think Grant will grow up bad and come to what she said ? ”

“ No, no, I hope not. I don’t think it. Not if he has a loving little sister like you to be kind to him, and help him to do right. But you must pray about it, Gracie. Do you ever ask God to make Grant a good boy ? ”

“ I never had to take *all* the charge of him before, Jeanie. Mother did most, and he was always quiet with her ; but when he gets angry, oh, then he seems wild, and I am frightened. Father often chides him, but it does no good ; ” and Gracie heaved a deep sigh.

She looked such a little thing to have “ all the charge ” of a boy—a boy her own age, for Gracie and Grant were twins.

Their mother had been in poor health for one or two years. Wearily she had gone about her daily tasks. Wearily she had gone to rest of a night, and wearily she had risen to her work in the morning. No one knew how much her poor limbs ached ; how often she scrubbed the floor and cleaned the house when she was more fit to lie in her bed. Her little Grace knew something of it, and many a little act of kindness she did for her mother, especially the last few months. “ I’ll scrub the floor, mother,” she would say ; “ you look so weary like. I’d like to, mother.”

“ No, no, child, your arms are too wee for such a task ; I’ll do it bit by bit,” her mother would answer, and for many a week she did it herself—stopping to rest every few minutes—but the day came when Gracie took the brush from her weary, nerveless hand, and finished the floor, and

washed up the dishes, and lighted the fires, under her mother's guidance.

Her husband was at work all day felling wood—he was a wood cutter—and he was tired when he came home, and it seemed natural to him that his wife should be tired too. He was rather a selfish man. As long as his supper was ready for him, the fire brightly burning, and a drop of toddy at hand before he went to bed, he asked no questions. He did not give much love; he did not expect to receive much. He liked to have his little girl beside him of an evening. Of Grace he was very fond, after his fashion, though he took but little notice of Grant. The boy's quick impulsive nature did not suit him, and he always misunderstood him—thought he meant mischief, and looked at his misdeeds in their darkest light. Hence Grant shrunk out of his father's way, to his mother's side, even from a very little child.

John Campbell, when roused, was a most passionate man; he did not stop to think of the result of his words or actions. This made both his wife and children quiet in his presence. Yet he was not *often* roused to a passion, for he was too indifferent, as a rule, about the words or deeds of those around him. He was absorbed in one great object—that of saving money. He would allow no waste in his home, no unnecessary spending of his dearly-loved money, and to collect it and lay it by he worked early and late. He would work in the fields when his felling was done, if any of the farmers were anxious to get their turnips hoed in haste, their hay made, or crops gathered in. He cultivated his little bit of

garden, and sent Grace with vegetables or flowers to the next village, where stood a few new houses without gardens of their own.

Grace knew how slow he was to give her mother money for clothes, how he gave it her little by little, always telling her to be as sparing as she could. Therefore she was the more vexed when any accident occurred which would cause fresh expenditure, and bring down her father's displeasure. To-day she was afraid of the consequences if her father knew Grant's best coat was torn. In the old days her mother managed to shield Grant, and keep him out of his father's way when he was angry. Grace now, young as she was, wanted to take this burden upon herself. Why? Because her mother had turned her dying eyes to her, and murmured—"Remember, Grace, be good to Grant; help him to be a good laddie. Take care of him. God bless my bairns." And Grace had made up her mind to watch over and shield that twin brother—that wild, often lawless, high-spirited, yet loving boy. Yes, he could love; and love seemed the only chain that could bind him. He loved his mother, and he loved Gracie.

You can understand, little reader, that as John Campbell was a mean man, and his wife a timid, weakly woman, she did not want to contend with him, and she did not like to raise the question of having any help in the house, for the neighbours thereabout were few, and would not help without payment. So she toiled on, with Gracie's help, till a fortnight before she died.

Then Mrs. Fern came in and out, and now Gracie was to keep the little cottage as best she could, with her father's and Grant's help.

CHAPTER III.

THE MITHERLESS BAIRNS.



Whether shall I do about Grant's coat?" asked Gracie, with a sigh. "I can't mend it. Mother could, if she were here. Oh, why did she die, and leave me so very lonely? I feel as if the world was so dull, so drear, so empty, as if I wanted to reach after something happy, something good, that must be somewhere, only I can't get it. I suppose it is mother. Cannot she ever come back?"

"She would not wish to, Gracie dear," said Jeanie; "her work is done. God has seen fit to call her away. Think how weak and ailing she was. We believe she is happy now. You would not wish her to come back. Remember you have work to do. You *are* very little, and I'm sorry, so very sorry for you."—Here Jeanie's lip quivered; she could hardly say all she wanted. She did not generally speak so freely, but a strong liking had sprung up in her heart for this little

girl, who clung to her so fondly, though she had known her but a little while.

"But, Gracie, God will help you if you look to Him—help you to be willing to give your mother up, and to do what you can to make your father and Grant comfortable. Mother says, if He was willing to give up His only Son to die for us, He is willing to give us everything else that is good for us. I think you want to know how much He loves you, Gracie, then the world would not seem so dull and empty. I wish mother was here, she could tell you all about it. But I nearly forgot her message; she wants you and Grant to come and take tea with us. Will your father let you? Mother thinks it is too sad for you to be shut up here."

"I would like—but yet I don't like to leave mother alone. You know what I mean, Jeanie; she is lying up stairs, so white, so still," said little Gracie, with shaking lip, "and father might come and feel lonesome without me, and I must look after him," she added, with a womanly shake of her curly head.

"That's quite right, dear, we will find some one to stay in the house, of course—just let's wait and see how things turn out."

"How are ye, Jeanie MacLean," cried Mrs. Fern from the cottage door, "I'm in a sore plight. John Campbell is na come hame as he promised, and I want to gang awa to me ain folk."

"You can get away, Mrs. Fern," answered Jeanie gladly, "I have come to stay a little while with the children. I will bide till the father comes home; mother doesn't want me." Mrs. Fern was well

pleased to be off, and perhaps feeling rather ashamed of the way she had treated the little ones made her quicken her steps, for it was not long before she was out of the house.

Gracie was delighted, and it was soon arranged that she should sit at the cottage door while Jeanie went a little way into the wood to seek for Grant. She passed along a little beaten path, with bushes and brakes on either side, calling him by name, and then turned towards a hollow place in the wood. She knew the children often played here—the roots of the tall trees, which were everywhere laid bare, made snug little seats and nooks to play in. Violets and primroses grew in pretty clusters a little later on in the season, with wild hyacinths and anemones. It was just such a spot as children would choose for a “wee pic-nic,” and in the summer time the school boys and girls from the next village spent many a holiday afternoon playing in and out of the hollow. Sure enough, a curly head made its appearance from behind a bush at the sound of Jeanie’s footsteps.

“Grant, is it you?” she cried, “I am so glad to find you. Poor Gracie is unhappy that you have left her alone. Get up, and come back me.”

“Gracie isn’t alone, she’s got Mrs. Fern with her, and I am not going back; I hate Mrs. Fern.”

“Mrs. Fern is gone away home, and Grace wants you very much.”

Grant sprang up. “Is Grace alone with—only mother; I’ll go this minute,” said Grant, trying to swallow down a great lump in his throat, and slashing violently at the trees and bushes to give vent to his feelings.

“I’m going to stay with Gracie and you till

father comes home, Grant; you would be so lonely without anyone."

"Then I needn't go in, Gracie don't want me; I like being out here best."

"Why won't you come in? We both want you, Grant; be a good boy, and come along at once."

"It's dreadful in there," sobbed Grant. "There is no one to be kind to you. But *you* don't know how it feels; you've got your mother. Me and Grace haven't any one."

"I'm so sorry for you, Grant; but you've got Grace."

"Don't be sorry, Jeanie; it makes me cry, and I don't want to cry; I hate to cry. Real boys don't cry. I haven't cried since I fell off the shed and hurt my arm, and that's ever so long ago, and no one knew about that but mother."

"I'll not tell, Grant; but there's no shame in crying, though you must not fret, for there's your father to take care of you, and you love him, don't you?"

"Father doesn't love me much; he calls me Gruff, and I hate that; he knows I hate it," and the colour sprang into Grant's face, and he slashed more violently at the bushes.

"Mother thought you'd like to come and take tea with us to-night if your father would let you. Will you come?" asked Jeanie, wishing to turn the subject.

"It's better than being at home," said Grant, as he walked along toward the cottage.

"I'll show you a book of pictures, pictures about battles and soldiers. It was my father's," exclaimed Jeanie.

"That'll be fine. I'll come," replied Grant eagerly.

CHAPTER IV.

A HAPPY EVENING.



RACE was very much relieved to see him safely back, and her father coming in soon with a companion, Jeanie obtained leave for them to take tea at her mother's cottage, where she promised to mend Grant's coat. The afternoon was bright and fine, everything looked calm and peaceful, and the children walked quietly along by Jeanie's side.

"Isn't it beautiful!" said Grace.

"Yes," answered Jeanie. "I was thinking how good God is to us."

"He's taken mother away," said Grant, shortly.

"So he has. Do you think He loves Grant and me, Jeanie?"

"I'm sure of it," she answered quietly. "The Bible says, 'He *so* loved the world that He gave His Son,' and you are in the world, and He gave His Son for you. It may be you would have been satisfied with having your mother, and not

wanted Him if she had lived. We must love Him best, and we can't love Him till we know that He loves us. What do you sigh for, Gracie?"

"Because I can't *feel* in my heart that God loves *me*. I never thought much about it, only now I feel so kind of lonesome I'd like to know that."

"Mother can show you out of the Bible. Mother knows all about it, she taught me; and here we are. And I declare mother has tea all ready. She thought we'd come."

And there, sure enough, in the snug little kitchen, with the bright pots and pans all round shining like silver and gold, was the table spread, and two mugs and little plates set down for Gracie and Grant. Those little plates and mugs were not set down without a tear and a very gentle sigh. In happy days gone by, a little brother of Jeanie's had sat up at the table by her side, and used one mug with a bright painted robin red-breast on it, while she drank out of the other, that one with a little pink rose-bud. Mrs. MacLean's husband had made one of the little party then, a pleasant, kindly man, and they were very well off in those days, and used to plan how their children should have a good education, and look forward to the time when they would grow up to be a comfort to their parents; and now the father and the little son were called away, and Jeanie and her mother left alone, and yet not alone, for they knew God as their Father and their Friend, and many lessons of His loving care had they learned in this trial. Mrs. MacLean's motherly heart felt for the two bereaved children as one only can who has passed through severe trial, and she heaped

their plates with bread and butter and jelly pieces, and talked cheerily to them through that pleasant tea-time.

Grant, subdued and quieted, behaved very well, and made a favourable impression on Jeanie's mother, and Gracie was very happy. The atmosphere of that little home seemed so peaceful—Mrs. MacLean's voice was so loving and gentle—that she longed to throw her arms around her neck and sob upon her bosom, but she dare not.

"Do you poor little lambs know anything about the Good Shepherd, who loves you and gave His life for you—who sees the rough places before you and wants to help you over them?"

Grant looked at Grace. Gracie looked down. "I know who you *mean*," she answered; and she longed to say, "Tell us all about Him. I want to be sure He loves *me*, Mrs. MacLean,"—but she dare not, for Grace was very shy, especially with people she liked the most.

"Fetch me down the Bible, Jeanie," said her mother. "I'll read the bairns a verse before they go."

"'We love Him because He first loved us,' that's the verse written inside my big Bible. My father wrote it in when he gave it me the day I was married, and I took it for 'my verse.' Gracie, isn't it a sweet little verse? 'He first loved us.'"

"The Good Shepherd loved us and gave His life to save us, when we were wandering far away from Him, and now He wants to fold you in His arms and make you His own. Do you want Him, Gracie?"

"Yes, I do, but He seems so far off," answered

Gracie with an effort; I never thought much about wanting Him before—perhaps now, Mrs. MacLean, when I want Him because I've got hardly any one else, and haven't come before, He won't hear me."

"O child, what are you saying?" she replied tenderly and earnestly at hearing such sad words. "You little know our Saviour's heart of love, 'love which no tongue can teach.' Poor bairn, do you really think He would turn away from a mere babe and a motherless bairn like you. The shepherds on yon hills would listen to the bleatings of the little lambs, and seek them, fold them when tired and hungry, carry them if weary, and shelter them from the storm; and our good Lord, who bore the storm for us, who bared His bosom for the blow to shield us, do you not think He would listen to the cry of a child? Ay, Gracie. Now don't look at it that way. Don't think hard things of the One who died for you."

Gracie longed to say, "I didn't mean *that*, I know He is good, so good that He seems far away from *me*," but the lump in her throat wouldn't let her—her little heart was very sore and very weary. She would liked to have laid her head down on the Good Shepherd's bosom and rested there, but as yet she knew Him not in all His tender pity and love to the lost sheep. Instead of looking first at what *He is*, she was looking into her own heart to feel a restful happy feeling there. She turned quickly round to get her hat and shawl from the table, to hide the trembling of her lips and the tears that would come. Mrs. MacLean saw neither, and thought perhaps she was anxious to get away and was tired of speaking of these

things, so she turned to her little kitchen press (or cupboard) for a scone of her own making for each of them. Then she bade Grant be a good boy and mind what Grace told him, and help her in the house as much as he could, out of school hours.

"And you, Gracie dear, ask the Saviour to help you to believe in His goodness, and teach you to say from your heart, 'We love Him because He first loved us.' God bless you, and lead you into the narrow path, my dear."

"Mrs. MacLean is a stunning nice old lady," exclaimed Grant, as they ran along the road together. The shades of night were fast falling, and it looked rather dreary outside, that April night, after the cosy bright little kitchen at Mrs. MacLean's.

"Don't call her '*old*,' Grant; she has such a young-looking face with such a pleasant look in her eyes, and such a kind smile," said Grace rather indignantly.

"Her hair is quite grey, and that *makes* a person old," answered Grant decidedly.

"She doesn't look to me as if she ever could grow old, or cross, as old people often are," replied Grace; "there's Mrs. M'Pherson next door to us, how cross she is, and she is old; to be sure she is ill, and her grand-daughters don't treat her very kindly, and I don't think she ever reads her Bible as Mrs. MacLean does. I expect there's a great deal in *that*. I mean to read the Bible, Grant."

"Because you don't want to grow cross?" asked Grant.

"For one thing—beside I want to go where mother's gone, for another."

"Mother read hers sometimes, didn't she?" asked Grant.

"Yes, of course, and she read it ever so much last week, when you were at school; she told me to read it more than she had ever done, and to read it to you."

"I never *can* understand much that's in the Bible; if ever I open it, it always comes up at the hard parts. I like to hear about Daniel and Moses, that's all I know," exclaimed Grant.

"O Grant! you know more than that. But you should get on with your reading, you can't spell the chapters out right, and then it does not sound sense, and you can't understand. Now you go to school you'll soon get on, and we can read at nights when father is away. I should like to find that part about the Good Shepherd Mrs. MacLean talked about."

"No, let's first find that part about the giant who got his head cut off," cried her brother.

"I say, Gra', we've come to the wood you never like to go through in dark nights, but it's not dark to-night."

The bushes rustled,—Grace started—Grant laughed. "It's only a rabbit we've startled or a bird."

"I know," answered Grace nervously; "but I never like the wood on a dark night—the trees seem to whisper, and I always fancy things; but don't tell on me, Grant."

"I'd never make lads or lassies laugh at you, Grace—you never call *me* 'Gruff' or do spiteful things, but it's awful silly to be afraid of nothing."

"I'm glad we're home," said the little girl, making a run into the cottage, where her father and a

companion were sitting over the fire smoking. Before the children went to bed, their father said shortly—he was very quiet that night—"I've had a note from your Uncle George; he says he is coming some time soon."

"Uncle George," said Gracie to herself, "and *he* is my mother's brother, and I only saw him when I was a wee thing two years old. Mother said he was good. I'm glad, but father doesn't seem."

No, her father didn't care much for Uncle George's visit.



CHAPTER V.

GRANT'S RETREAT.



HE next day passed and no Uncle George arrived. Mrs. Campbell was laid in the little quiet kirkyard. The children's father had to go out about some work in the afternoon, so Grant went off by himself into the woods; he could not bear the neighbours coming in and out —some came from curiosity, some to speak a word of comfort, nearly all gave a word of advice after their own fashion. He was tired of being told to "be a good boy now he had no mother to look after him;" and though they little thought it, every time a strong-minded neighbour who wished to improve the occasion remarked that "no doubt he was sorry *now* he had been such a troublesome boy, and if he had his time over again would have minded his mother better—though they little thought it, it caused *such* a commotion in Grant's mind. He was not going to let them see him cry like a baby, though his heart beat quick, and the

blood rushed to his face, and the lump came to his throat. He remembered only *too* well how he had been careless with his clothes and torn them oftentimes, and caused his poor mother to mend them when *too* ill really to sit and work, and how sorry he had been at the time, and made up his mind never to be so careless again, and how he had forgotten. He remembered breaking one of the best dishes he ought not to have used, and how *she* bore the scolding father gave for it.

He remembered the boys tempting him to play truant from school, and how vexed she was when she heard it, but the *neighbours* didn't think he remembered *any* thing, for it roused Grant's temper to be reminded by them of these things he would so gladly have forgotten, and he answered more shortly till "I wish you wouldn't bother me so" burst from his lips, and he rushed away from the cottage to bury his grief in the woods.

"I know I shall be bothered now," he said to himself, "and if I get into scrapes there will be no one to help me out, so I'll seek a place where no one will find me; it will come in handy, I dare say." He searched about a long while without finding a snug enough retreat; at last he came upon a little bit of dry ditch, about eight yards long, some way into the wood. The bushes grew thick on either side with long straggling branches, and though nearly bare now, would soon be covered with foliage; at the end of the ditch he trained them across from one side to the other, and occupied himself in getting sand and gravel from the hollow some distance off to make a clean floor.

"Now, if I can only get one or two bits of board

to put under these branches to make a roof, it will be a nice little house, and if Grace won't tell on me I'll let her see it."

Grace had to remain indoors and hear the comments on her little brother for running off in such a passion. "Ah," said one, "he's a bad boy; I always said he'd come to harm—there was always a difference atwixt the twin bairns even from the cradle. Mony a time I telled the poor mother so, but she was daft about the lad. Gracie here was a quiet-like little cratur, but Gruff would flash his eyes and beat with his wee fists for the least thing."

"Did ye never see him put his arms round mother's neck, and sob and cry for having vexed her?—and ye shouldna call him Gruff, it makes him worse, he can't bear it," said Grace, taking her brother's part, for she thought, "I *will* stand up for Grant now; they'd never talk so if mother was here."

"It's rather a shame like to be picking faults in the poor bairn, ill-tempered though he may be, and his mother just laid in the kirkyard." The first speaker may have felt a twinge of conscience, for she soon disappeared and was speedily followed by her companions, and Grace was left alone.

Presently she heard a knock against the wall which separated the two dwellings. She knew what it meant; her mother had bade Mrs. M'Pherson knock when she was alone and wanted anything, for her two granddaughters often left her by herself for hours together, and the poor creature was very infirm. Grace closed her own cottage door carefully, and locked it with the key which hung round her neck by a long braid, and which she

kept tucked into the band of her frock; her father had bade her wear it, and never leave the door unlocked. Then she softly opened the door leading into Mrs. M'Pherson's room. "Oh, child, I'm sorry to trouble ye, but I'm that bad with the rheumatics the day that I can hardly walk, and Nannie has gone away to the mill, and Susan—the wild creature—is off to the village this two hours; she should have been here this long while, for she had only to carry some collars and shirts she'd been dressing (or ironing) to Mrs. Masters at the White House. But she doesn't think of her puir Granny. I wish I was away in the kirkyard, where they've put your mother, Gracie; she's well enough where she is, out of this weary world. But I'm forgettin' what I want ye for. I'm wearying for a cup of tea, and here's no kettle boiling; would ye fill it, lassie, and infuse a cup when it boils?"

"Yes, Mrs. M'Pherson, that I will this minute. I'm sorry Susan has left you, but just you knock at the wall when you want me; I shall often be alone, and I would like to come and help you."

"Aye, your mother was a good wife and kind to me, and I dare say you'll be the same, as long as I need you; it wont be verra long, I'm hopin', my long rest is near."

"Are you going to heaven when you die?" asked Grace simply, as she set the kettle on the fire.

"That's a funny question to ask me, child; all good folks go there, ye ken."

"Then I suppose you are good, Mrs. M'Pherson, and you were good when you were young—I wish I was."

"You're a good enough lassie, Grace. As for me, I'm but a puir cratur now, and I'm hopin' it will go well with me at last. I did all the good I could when I was able, that is as far as I know, but don't *onsettle* me, child," added the poor woman, who felt an uncomfortable questioning arise within her as to her goodness.

"No, only if you thought you wouldn't get better you know, Mrs. M'Pherson, wouldn't it be best to be sure where you are going? I'm going to read my Bible now. Mrs. MacLean said it was the Good Shepherd who, we are told, did it all for us—took us to heaven, I mean—only, I am afraid I don't love Him enough yet for that. Do you love Him very much, Mrs. M'Pherson?"

"Love who?"

"The Good Shepherd."

"I don't know nothing about it, child; you *onsettle* me so, I'll take my tea now. It gives me a nervish kind o' feelin' to hear ye talk as if my call might be comin' the night."

"Then you don't feel quite easy, Mrs. M'Pherson," said Grace, pitifully.

"Funerals being so near hand upset one, lassie, and puts a body in a tremble, and when you question an old body like me in yer old-fashioned way, it don't help me to feel easy; but come in again for all that, child, it don't do any harm to get a bit of chat, and may be you can learn something as will do me good."

"I learned a nice little bit of a text the other day," answered Grace; "it is this—'We love Him because He first loved us.' But I'm afraid I don't love Him enough. You see I didn't think about it till mother died."

"Love! that's a thing I've little to do with now," replied the old woman. "I had a wee lassie who loved me once, years and years ago, but she lies in the kirk-yard, and my boy, James (Nan and Susan's faither), he died fifteen years ago; a fine lad he was—but that's all."

"But it says, 'He loved us,'" said Grace, thoughtfully.

"That's good folks, child."

"But I thought you were good."

"No, no, I'm not good at all, I'm but a puir body."

"Then you can't feel quite easy that you are going to heaven," said Grace, earnestly.

"Didn't I ask you not to *onsettle* me, child," said the old woman querulously; "I don't feel myself this afternoon."

"Shall I tidy up for you?" asked Gracie, who, being naturally timid, was rather frightened at the old woman's cross tones, and thought best to change the subject.

"You'd better not, or Sue will leave it to you whenever she has a mind, but you might pour a cup of tea for me."

This Grace did, and brushed up the hearth, then bidding the old woman good-bye, and promising to look in again soon, she went back home, and set everything in order for her father's return.



CHAPTER VI.

LONGINGS FOR THE NARROW PATHWAY.



JOHN CAMPBELL had got a job of work in a wood about a mile off. As you have heard, he was a wood cutter, and this would oblige him to be up at half-past five, get a cup of tea, and begin work at six, so he gave Gracie to understand she must be up and boil the kettle before he started. She had done it many a time for her mother the last month. She was generally awake early, and now it was with a new feeling of responsibility that she undertook it. "It is just as if this was my *own* little cottage," thought Gracie. "I'll try to keep it as nice as I can, so father 'll be proud of his housekeeper, and just as mother would like to see it."

Her father took his cup of tea, patted Gracie on the head, and told her to be "a good lassie," and never leave the cottage door unlocked. In fact, she was never to go more than just outside with-

out his knowing before he left home where she was going to—then he went away. He was to come back for breakfast at half-past eight, when his porridge must be ready, and Grace or Grant must bring him his dinner to the wood. "Remember and have a cup of tea at six, Grace, for I'm going away sharp to help Farmer Kemp for an hour or two after that."

"Yes, father," said Gracie, with a twofold feeling, partly of importance, partly the lonely feeling that now she had no one to cheer her on at her work, and that all the responsibility lay on her little shoulders. She made the porridge very nicely without burning it, and without lumps, and then after her father was gone she made the beds and tidied the rooms, and scrubbed the kitchen till her little arms were very tired. Just as she had finished whitening the door-step, and was busy polishing the brass door-handle, who should she see opening the gate but Jeanie. Gracie dropped the duster. "Oh, I am glad," she cried, "Come in, Jeanie, the kitchen is just about dry."

"You are busy," replied Jeanie. "I am glad you like to see places clean, Grace; but you haven't done your grate yet."

"No, I'm going to do that next."

"You should do that before you wash your floor," said Jeanie, smiling, "for the dust will fly about."

"Oh, I *am* sorry, of course I should," answered the little girl ruefully.

"Never mind, you'll remember next time. I didn't come to find fault, I think you've done well."

"I like to know," answered Grace; "now, I am afraid I shall spoil all I have done."

"There's no fear of that; just be careful when you sweep up the ashes. Oh dear, I am tired! Do you know, Gracie, I so soon get tired now—I suppose it is the mild weather coming in so quickly—I sometimes feel I hardly know how to sweep the house."

"All your nice pretty colour in your cheeks is going away," answered the little girl; "you do look tired, perhaps you work too hard."

"No, mother doesn't let me; of course I have to stay up and iron sometimes, because mother is not strong. I shall do well enough if you will give me a drink of cold water."

Gracie jumped on a chair and reached down a glass. "I never give Grant glasses, he would break them, so I put them out of the way. I only hope I shall not break dishes, there is nothing makes father so angry. Here, Jeanie, is some nice cold water to drink," said Grace, as she gave her the tumbler.

"Thank you; that is refreshing. Now, can I help with any mending? Have you any stockings or socks with holes in them, because I brought my thimble with me? Mother said she was sure you would be glad of help."

"Oh, there's a pair of Grant's stockings and two pair of father's with holes in them, and the window blind has a hole in it too. I *should* be glad to have them done. I will get my hair smoothed, and wash my hands, and if you would help me, Jeanie, I think I could do one pair."

"We will get all done between us, Gracie;"

and soon they were setting busily to work, while the sun streamed into the cottage window.

Mrs. Campbell had taught Gracie to work neatly, so that with a little direction she could mend very well ; for her mother had in her young days been carefully looked after. She had been brought up well, and had a good education given her. Mrs. Campbell's father had been a shoemaker in a small town in Cumberland, and his only daughter Grace was in her young days the pride of his heart. She was never very strong in health, and consequently her parents, who were well-to-do tradespeople, and dearly fond of her, preferred to have her stay at home, to cheer and gladden them with her gentle loving ways. So Grace grew up with her only brother George till John Campbell came to work for a time at a short distance from the town. He was a good-looking young man then, and formed an acquaintance with Grace Grant, much against the parents' wish. At last they gave a reluctant consent to the marriage, and when John took her away to Scotland they sorrowed indeed. Trouble came, ill health came, and poor Grace had not the spirit to stand against it. Campbell soon sunk down into a selfish indifferent husband, not sufficiently alive to her delicate health, and the bad effects these troubles wrought upon her sensitive mind. So, after a time, they each went their own way. She saw it was of no use to come to him for sympathy and help, and carried her trials and difficulties alone—living for her children ; she taught them all she knew, and tried to keep them separated from the baneful influence of bad company. Hence they were more simple in many

ways than most children, and more clever in household matters. The last two years of her life, Mrs. Campbell had made a great confidante of little Grace. The child knew most of her mother's anxieties and cares, and being observant and shrewd, guessed many a thing not confided to her. She knew her mother fretted for the home of her youth. She knew her mother longed for the old parents she had not seen for four or five years, and she guessed that her mother did not find all the comfort in her father that she wanted.

Little Grace saw the tired, careworn look, and noted the sigh that often fell, and though she saw her mother read her Bible and kneel in prayer, she could also see it did not, until the last few days of her life, give her poor mother all the comfort Mrs. MacLean got. "Why is this?" thought little Grace many a time, but she was afraid of troubling her mother by asking; and now, as she sat at work by Jeanie, and her thoughts went back to her mother and her mother's trials, the tears fell fast.

"What is it, dear?" asked Jeanie.

"I was thinking of mother," said Gracie, dashing the tears away, and letting her work fall in her lap. "I was wishing she had been as happy as your mother. Your mother has lost your father and the little brother you tell of, but she is happy. The Bible makes her happy," said little Grace, simply. "My mother had the Bible all the time, and prayed to God, but the sweet calm look didn't come till four days before she died. Oh, I wish it had always been there," sighed Gracie. "I asked mother about it, and she said"—but here the tears came too fast.

"Tell me what?" asked Jeanie.

"She just said, 'Ah, child, it's a pity I didn't cast my burden on the Lord before. I believe now I might have been happier and more useful ;' and then she said something about peace, and told me never to rest until I had peace with God; and she made me promise to read my Bible, and I should find peace came by trusting in Jesus Christ—'by trusting all to Jesus,' she kept saying over many times. Was it just because she was going to die that she felt happy, like we hear folks do—I mean like good people you read of—or do you think if my mother had felt like that before, she could have been happier."

"I have heard mother say that we may be happy in a prison, if we know the love of God; and it does make one feel so glad, Gracie, to know that He is caring for us, and helping us if we are believing in Jesus as our Saviour, that I fancy He could make the darkest day seem bright."

"I wish mother's days had been bright. I can't bear to think of that sad face she carried so long; it comes up before me, Jeanie, and I wonder if I was as good as I should have been to her, and helped her enough, and it makes me want her back again, and then I wish I had known what *your* mother knows, and I could have told *my* mother about it—but I mean, I *do* mean to grow up like that.

Jeanie put her arm round Grace. "I wish I could help you better, Gracie, but I know God will give you His peace if you ask Him. Our Saviour died to gain it for us. I don't think you need fret about not being a good girl to your mother. She used to say you were such a help to her.

And just thank God she did go so happily and learned to trust all to Him; and let us try to serve Him while we are young. I wish *I* was more like Him."

Little Grace was like a caged bird struggling to be free—she saw there was something bright and happy to be gained, and she was not in possession of it. She wanted a strong kind hand to open the door and let her out into the full enjoyment of what was all ready for her, but, like many another, she was trying to gain it by her own efforts instead of looking to One who had done it for her.—As a little bird might be beating against the bars, and vainly struggling to get out of its prison, instead of looking to the open door behind it, and flying out, so she was now ready to begin to try and struggle to free herself, when the door stood wide open, and she might have gained possession of all she wanted at once by trusting the Mighty One—mighty to save. When we are filled with the thought of our own doings, it hides the light from us; we may read beautiful promises and simple truths, but we cannot enjoy them. Little Grace was awakened by the death of her mother to think of another world, to long after some one to love who would never die, who could fill the void in her affectionate little heart. She *must* cling to something, to some one. Her father she was very fond of, but he was away all day and was not a demonstrative man. Grant was a boy, and like a boy rarely showed all he felt, and thought it manly to be off-hand and rather blunt; he liked to be out of doors, climbing trees, catching birds, hunting for eggs and flowers, fishing, sliding, or bathing—though only a little boy of ten years,

he was clever in all these sports. So the children were not very much together, though many a time Grace would join him in a game, or a ramble through the wood.

After this Grace would be a great deal alone, and the solemn thoughts of eternity connected with her mother's death filled her mind. Instead, then, of looking up to God and seeing what a wonderful way of escape He has provided for lost sinners through our Lord Jesus Christ, little Grace looked into her own sinful heart, and there found that she did not love God as she ought, and determined the first thing to love Him better and read the Bible more, till she had gained a happy satisfied feeling. Do you think, little reader, she could gain it in that way?



CHAPTER VII.

A SISTER'S LOVE.



EANIE stayed and helped her with her work till it was done, and waited till Grace had set the simple meal of bread and cheese and tea ready for her father and Grant, and then the lengthening shadows warned her to depart. As she was bidding

Grace goodbye, Grant dashed in.

"Father's coming," he said, "and I want to get cleaned before he comes in. He'll scold if he sees me like this;" and Grant began to beat his clothes with his hand, sending down the dust on to the floor.

"Oh please, Grant, I've scrubbed the floor to-day, don't; oh, see all the mess you've made. I want it to be clean when father comes," cried Grace eagerly.

"What a pity," replied Grant hastily; "but I can't help it now. Do help me a bit, or he'll be angry and say I've spoiled my coat."

"Well, come here," said his sister, pulling him

quickly across the kitchen to a little back place used for washing, &c., and seizing a boot brush, she brushed vigorously at his coat ; "only I do wish you would not get so dirty. Is father near? and where have you been since school?"

"Father's a good way off, right at the bottom of the hill. I saw him coming, and didn't I just tear along to get in first. You know he told me I didn't need my boots to go to school in, but I've been somewhere after I came out, that I could get along far quicker with them on. And now this lace is in a knot, and I can't undo it;" and Grant tugged and tugged away.

"I'll try and undo it with my fingers, they are small ; and you really mustn't break the lace, Grant, it has to last you a long while." But Grant was too fearful that his father would come in, and he pulled till the lace snapped, then he threw the boots covered with dust away behind a tub, and had washed his face and hands before the door opened, and John Campbell came in. Grace had tried hard to have everything clean and bright to-day, and it was a very pleasant little kitchen when the sun shone in through the trees, which were much thinner at the edge of the wood. Had her father been in a good humour, he could not have failed to notice how clean and neat it looked, but he was disappointed about a job of work, and irritated and annoyed. "I hope the tea's all ready," he said, throwing himself into a chair.

"Yes, father, the tea's nicely infused," answered Grace, bringing the teapot from the fire.

"Is Grant in?" he asked, again.

"Yes, he's in the back kitchen."





"Tell him to come and take off my boots, my back's aching; and you fry me a bit of bacon, Grace, I'm hungry."

Grace reached down the frying pan, and in another minute the bacon was frizzling on the fire, while she warmed a plate for her father. Grant came in reluctantly to unlace his father's boots. It was a job he often had to do when his father was tired, and one he disliked, especially this evening, for he was aware he had disobeyed his father, and he would have liked to keep out of his way. "I've just made my hands brow* and clean" said Grant, looking at the heavy dirty boots.

"Well, you'll just have to clean them again. Be quick now. Have you been at school the† day?"

"Yes," said Grant, as he tugged away at the boots.

"You'd better set to your book while you have the chance; you must soon earn your food and clothes. Stop. Do that boot up again and put on yer ain. I mind I have to trudge to Farmer Kemp's, after tea."

Grant turned red with vexation as he began to lace the dirty boot.

"I don't want to go," he said.

"You'll have to go, and pretty smart too, and bring back a bag of tatties;‡ you've come to an end, haven't you, Gracie?"

"There's only a few more, not enough for to-morrow," she answered, and having served up the bacon and put all ready, she hurried into the back kitchen and pulled out Grant's boots. "Father's

* Bonny.

† To-day.

‡ Potatoes.

angry to-night I can see, and he'll give Grant a whipping if he finds he has worn these boots," thought Grace; "I must try and clean them," and she pulled out the brushes quickly.

"Grace," called her father, "come and get yer tea along with me; you've been a good lassie the day, I reckon; here's a bit of bacon to you."

"Can I wait a minute, father?" asked Grace, anxiously.

"What for?" he asked, and getting no answer, and seeing Grant look red and sullen, he rose up and looked in at Grace. In a moment he understood. He knew that Grant's mother had often shielded him from blame when disobedient or in some childish scrape, and had Campbell been less irritable this evening, he might have let it pass; for there stood Gracie flushed and anxious, cleaning away at the boots; but there stood Grant flushed and angry at being found out, pouting his lips and frowning his brows.

"So you have been wearing those boots when I told you not, have you," said his father, taking hold of his shoulder; "been to school in them, I s'pose, and you think I can keep you like a gentleman while I work hard, do you?—take that and that," he said, boxing his ears, "and clean them boots yourself, and you Grace, see you don't encourage him in his bad ways. Where did you go in them, Gruff?"

No answer.

"To school, father," said Grace, "but come in and finish your tea, the bacon will be cold and you will be too late to go to Farmer Kemp's." Her father, who was tired and hungry, followed

Grace back to the kitchen, adding, "Very well, and I'll finish with him after."

"Don't be angry with Grant this time, father, and I'll see he don't wear them any more to school," said Grace; "I ought to have seen to him—mother told me to."

The meal was finished in silence, but when Gracie went to find Grant, to bring him to his father to go to Farmer Kemp's, he was not in the back kitchen, neither was he in the yard, and after calling him in vain, Grace was obliged to go and tell her father she could not find him. He was very angry. He wanted Grant's help back with the bag of potatoes, for he was tired, but after a vain search in the back kitchen and the yard, he started off alone, promising Grant a heavy punishment when he should turn up. As soon as her father was gone Grace sat down in her little chair, disappointed and sad. She felt she had not the heart to clear away the dishes and tidy up the room. "I hoped father would be so pleased to find a nice clean kitchen and tea all ready, but everything is spoiled, it is all no use. Father is angry, and Grant has run away, and perhaps he will never dare to come back; there is no mother to help, and I don't know what to do. I wish I knew God was *my* Father like Jeanie does, then I'd ask Him, but He seems so far off. But it won't do for me to sit still, that will make things worse. I'll clear up the place and then go out and see if I can find Grant; perhaps father will forgive him if I ask very hard, and Grant says he is sorry." It was growing quite dusk, so she made great haste, and in a few minutes all was neat and orderly again, and putting on her little shawl, she

prepared to look for her brother. First she reached down her mother's Bible and turned over leaf after leaf, hoping to find some word that might show a little girl what to do.

This Bible had belonged formerly to her grandmother, who had marked certain passages with ink. Gracie opened at one of these. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." "Come unto me" was underlined with two ink lines; so was "Learn of me." The rest of the verse with one.

"'Come unto me' and 'Learn of me,' who said that? Jesus, I suppose," said Grace, leaning hard on the table and pointing with her finger to the words. "Well I wish I could come to Him, but it's no use my trying, He is up in the sky now. Of course He was in the world when He said that, and it was easy for people to come. 'Learn of me,' too. That's just what I want. I'd like to know what God and Jesus would like a little girl to do whose father was angry, and whose brother had run away. The wood looks so dull and cheerless, I feel afraid of the little creatures that come out and fly about at night; yet I think I ought to go and try and find Grant. He isn't afraid, he would stay there all night I believe. If I thought God would be with me as he is with Mrs. MacLean, I'd go in a minute, but He has never promised to take care of me like He does of her—though I do mean to read some more of the Bible, and find out how I can be good like her, and get to love God more."

Grace closed the Bible, and put it carefully

ie present ; then she got a candle ready
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e door. "Come unto me, and learn of
ept saying over and over. The trees of
vere rustling in the evening breeze, and
ad sunk to rest for the night ; it was
lull and cool, and Grace felt rather
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done, but then her mother was in the
w it seemed to her deserted and sad, and
st going to knock at Mrs. M'Pherson's
sit with her a few minutes, or ask Susan,
to go with her in search of Grant, when
me one coming quickly down the road
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iled a pleasant though rather sad
coming right up to the cottage door,
ag inside, saying :—

CHAPTER VIII.

GRACE HAS A VISITOR.



S this John Campbell's cottage, and are you his daughter Grace?"

"Yes, sir," answered Grace, with a surprised and questioning air.

"Is it possible that little Gracie has grown as big as this? Do you know who I am, wee lassie?" Grace raised her clear blue eyes to his, while a bright flush of pleasure and surprise spread over her face. "Is it my Uncle George?" she asked.

"You are quite right, dear," he answered, stooping to kiss her cheek, and taking her hands in his. "Will you take me in for an evening? Is father at home, and your brother Grant?"

"No, they are out," she said, hesitatingly; "but come in, I'm glad you're here, Uncle George: father will be in soon."

He sat down in the arm chair by the little fire, and watched Gracie light the candle, then he took her on his knee. Neither spoke for a minute.

The little girl knew full well he was thinking of her mother. She knew her mother had loved her Uncle George dearly, and had hoped to see him before she died. He had written to say he would come as soon as he heard she was dangerously ill. Grace waited and wondered he did not speak, her own lips quivered as she remembered the message she had to give him, and two large tears rolled down her cheek. He noted the change in the little girl's face, and putting his arm round her, said, "So I wasn't in time to see your dear mother again, little Grace. I tried hard, but this was the earliest minute I could come." His voice grew thick as he asked, "Did she think I would come?" Grace lifted her eyes brimming over with tears to his face, as she answered, "Yes, Uncle George, at first she did, and then she thought you'd been stopped some way, and she told me to tell you—" but the sobs came too quick, and reading in her uncle's face the love, and sorrow, and sympathy that was there, she flung both arms round his neck, and hiding her face in his shoulder, said "O Uncle George, it is you I've been wanting, after all, since mother left," and the passionate sobs told all the pent-up sorrow of the little heart. "It's like my poor Grace, over again," he said softly to himself, while he passed his hands caressingly over the child's forehead, remembering his last visit to her mother years ago. "I trust this little one has not already felt the blank her mother felt. You have not given me the message, dear," he added aloud.

"Mother left her love, the old love, she said, for you, and she told me to tell you, it was all well, and she had found sweet peace at last."

"Thank you, darling; now, lift up your head and dry your tears before father comes. I am glad for that message, Grace; I heard the sad news down in the village two hours ago. I almost expected it: I am thankful she went happily; from what she wrote last time I believe she had found the Saviour. I am sorry for you, little Grace, but if you make Him your Saviour too, you can be a very happy little girl. There is no love like His. Do you know His love?"

"I don't think I do, Uncle George; but I want to so much, and now you can tell me what I must do to 'come to Him and learn of Him.' I read these words a little ago, and I want to know how I can mind them, and if they are meant for little girls like me. They are in mother's Bible. May I show you?"

"Yes, darling; but I think I've seen them before, and I think I saw the dear hand put those ink lines below them. Yes," he said, gazing at the old Bible as it lay on his knee, "My mother marked those words as my sister Grace and I stood at her knee, twenty years ago."

"Oh!" said Grace, catching her breath, "then you can tell me all about them; but first, Uncle George, I just remember I'm in a great trouble, and I'd be so glad if you could tell me what to do. Perhaps you would go to the dark wood with me and look for Grant, for father left an hour and a half ago, and he said he'd be home in two hours, and he will be angry with Grant, and if I could get him home first, perhaps if I begged hard, father would let him off. I promised mother I'd be good to Grant, and take all the care of him I could."

"I will do anything and everything to help you out of 'the great trouble,' Gracie, but you must tell me all about it. I don't understand."

"No, I made such a muddle of it," said Grace, laughing. She felt such a happy sense of security with this big uncle coming to her help, that the reaction was almost too great; but as quickly as she could she told him all the story of the evening's trouble.

"We will go at once," said her uncle, "and try and find him. You are not afraid with me, Gracie? God will take care of us."

"He will of you," thought little Grace, "and perhaps He will of me soon, when I have learned more about Him."

She clung closely to her uncle as they entered the wood.

"Do you think he has gone here?"

"Yes, I expect so. He climbs trees, you know; he may be in one of them now."

"Grant!" called his uncle, "Grant! we want you, old boy."

"Come down, Grant, if you are up in the trees," cried Grace.

No answer came to them, but a rustling here and there made Grace start.

"It is only a bird or a little animal we have disturbed," said her uncle; "but if you are frightened, Gracie, I'll take you home and look about alone."

"No, no; I like being with you, Uncle George, and if he hears me, maybe he will come home, and if I call by myself I think he would be sure to come, because he knows I am frightened in the wood of an evening, and perhaps he will come

and see if I am alone. He knows father wouldn't come and search for him like this. Let me call, uncle." So as they pursued their way her sweet clear voice rang out, "Grant, come down from the trees. It is Gracie come to find you. It will be all right if you come, Grant. *Do* come."

Grant had run round the back of the cottage after flinging down his boots, bent on escaping from his father.

He did not stop running till he was some way into the wood. Then he thought of the cave.

"The very thing! I only wish I'd finished it. I'll go and stay there till father is frightened, and then may be he will let me home without a beating."

His cave was only a short distance in the wood, but it was a very secure hiding place; it looked only like a large bush at the end of the ditch, but on lifting up one of the long drooping branches quite a little arbour was disclosed, and as Grant had torn a few boughs away, and propped up others by placing pieces of wood underneath to form a roof, and resting them on either side of the ditch, it made a snug retreat. He had been engaged after school in getting bags full of little stones for the floor, and was intending to carry off his tiny wooden stool from home for a seat, on the first opportunity. Grant had no very fixed idea what he was going to do in his little arbour, but he knew full well that he got into many a scrape, that he often hid from his father, and he knew there was only little Grace to shield him now; and in a dogged, resentful mood he had begun what he called his little cave. Afterwards he

found it an agreeable occupation, and now he thought of it when in disgrace.

"I don't like being *made* to undo his dirty boots, and I know what his *leatherings* are," he cried, as he jumped into the ditch and crawled under the branches. "It is rather dark under here this evening, but it is better than getting the strap."

It certainly was *very* dull, as the shadows around lengthened and he lay cheerless and alone, wondering how long it would be before he dared go home—whether if he waited till the middle of the night, and tapped gently at the window, Grace would let him in, for she slept in a bed in the kitchen wall, and her father in the little room upstairs. Then he thought he would rise up early again, and wait in the woods till his father was away. For Grant saw he was in a fix, and wondered what the end would be.

"If I had only a good blanket and plenty of food I'd do nicely; but it is getting horrid cold," said the little boy. "I wish father wouldn't ask me to do such things, or if he wouldn't *make* me. Wee Willie's father is awful kind to him, but father don't like me, he always *flees* at me, and drives me, and I hate it."

Grant had quite forgotten his act of disobedience.



CHAPTER IX.

GRANT IN TROUBLE.



TWO hours passed away, all was pretty quiet and dark, Grant was beginning to wish things had taken a different course. He would have liked very well to be snug in bed at home just now. He wanted his supper too, and he had serious thoughts of braving his father's anger.

"At any rate I may get out of here a little while, they are not looking for me, and it surely must be nearly morning," said he to himself. Instead of nearly morning, it was only half-past eight o'clock.

Just then he heard a sound of voices. "They are comin' after me," he thought, as he crouched down under the boughs.

"Grant, do come home," cried Grace. "It will be *all right* if you'll come."

Grant listened as she called again and again, then he lifted up the branches and crawled to the other end of the ditch, and making his way

between the bushes climbed one of his favourite trees. "It must be Grace, and Nancy from next door. I'll be quite sure it isn't father before I come down. It can't be him; Grace would never say, 'It'll be all right if you come,' if it was him."

Again Gracie's voice sounded through the woods.

"Perhaps I didn't hear any one else, and perhaps she is all alone and ever so frightened." In a moment Grant was on his feet. "Gracie, Gracie, I'm here," he cried,—*"this way, see."* A few moments after she had found her way to him, Uncle George following. "I'm so glad," cried the little girl, putting her arms round his neck; "*I am* glad I found you. Where have you been. You'd have starved here alone all night. See, I have brought Uncle George. I mean *he* came and brought me to find you, and if you'll promise not to run away any more perhaps father won't give you the strap to-night."

"So this is my little runaway nephew," said his uncle. "We have had quite a search for you, Grant. Come now, and help us out of the wood the shortest way, you know it so well; and then I must get a look at you and see what a big boy you are."

Thus reassured, Grant, feeling a little foolish, led the way.

In a few minutes they were within the cottage again. No father had arrived, and Uncle George, seating himself in the arm chair, called Grant to him, and said very kindly, "So this is my sister Gracie's *dear boy*, the boy she used to write about sometimes. Yes, that's the curly hair, and those are

the brown eyes and active hands, I've heard about. You are the boy who used to help her sometimes, and when you were a little tiny fellow you used to follow her about like a little shadow. You loved her dearly, Grant?" Grant had stood motionless, gazing at his uncle while he spoke. Here was some one very like his mother, speaking as she used to speak, not upbraiding him for his acts of naughtiness, or reminding him of troublesome ways. At his uncle's last question, he answered quickly and earnestly,

"Yes I did, and so I do now, and you are very like her, and I wish she *was* here to-night."

"You must not wish that; she is safe and happy, and will never be troubled more where she is."

"I know,—and now when I get into trouble *she* will never fret, so it does not matter so much."

"It does matter, my dear boy; you have some one else to try and please."

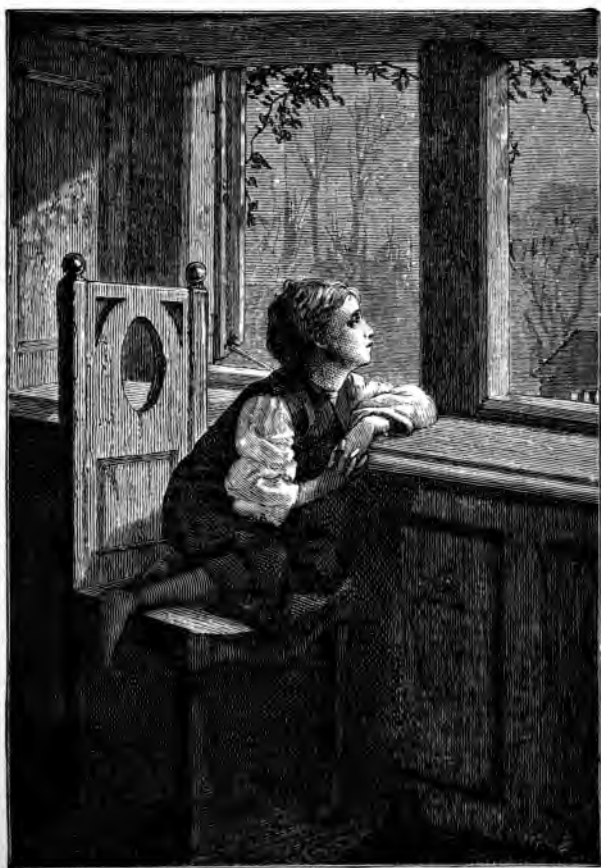
"Why do you say 'dear boy,' and look at me like that; no one does it here. I forgot though, there's Mrs. MacLean and Jeanie, they speak something like that."

"Are the people such terrible cross folk round here?" asked his uncle, smiling.

"Yes, some; there's Mrs. Fern—she is a terrible cross one; I ran away from her a week ago."

"You seem fond of running away, Grant. Could you not try to be more kind and gentle and get into fewer scrapes by being obedient to your father. You are growing a big boy, and now that you are left so much with Grace you should try and be a help to her as your mother wished you."

"I wasn't ever naughty to *her*," he answered, turning away to hide his eyes fast filling with tears.



"I believe you were a good boy to her, Grant, and I am sure you wish to remember her last words; tell me what they were."

"To love the Saviour and try to be good to father and Grace."

"Do you mean to follow her wishes?"

"I'd like, but it doesn't seem any use; when I get angry I just fire up, or run away."

"We will talk about it to-morrow, Grant. There is One who is willing to help you to set out on the narrow path, which leads to glory, where mother is gone. Will you promise me to pray a very short prayer to-night before you go to bed?"

"Yes, if I can remember it, uncle."

"It is this—'Teach me *Thy* way, O Lord.'"

"Teach me *Thy* way, O Lord," repeated Grant. "Yes, I'll do that."

"God bless you," said his uncle.

"I believe I see father coming with the bag of tatties on his back," cried Grace. "What will we do about Grant, Uncle George?"

"Grant must tell his father that he is sorry for disobeying him and wearing his boots. You will do that, Grant; and I will try and manage the rest. Do you hear me, my boy?" he asked, laying his hands firmly on Grant's shoulder.

"Yes," said Grant, slowly.

"In the meantime go upstairs, and pray that little prayer—'Teach me *Thy* way, O Lord.' It is the Lord's way for little children to obey their parents."

Glad to escape, Grant ran up the little stair to the bed-room, glad to take refuge before his father came in.

CHAPTER X

A LITTLE PEACEMAKER.



RACE satisfied herself, although it was very dark, that it was her father coming up the road, and then, with womanly tact, ran to meet him and acquaint him of her uncle's visit. She thought, or rather she *knew*, he would not wish to be surprised by Uncle George with a bag of potatoes on his back. John Campbell had always been jealous of his wife's relations, of their superior education and position, and he had never treated them so cordially that they cared to visit him.

The longing for her early home which his wife had often experienced in the first years of their married life had annoyed him. He had never tried to improve his mind, or become a true companion and help to her, but had been entirely taken up with the losses or gains of his daily toil. He was bent on saving every halfpenny that he could, and had kept his wife and companions

quite in the dark as to the amount he had laid by. Some said it was a nice round sum ; however this might be, his family was none the better, for so afraid was he of waste, that he was for ever grumbling about it, and on the watch for signs of extravagance. Grace understood it all, and was very much afraid he would not give a hearty welcome to her uncle, for her father had never cared to speak about him, and the very manner in which he had hinted at his coming a few days before, boded ill. Grace ran swiftly up the road to meet her father (if any one could get round him she could), and putting one little hand under the bag to take off a bit of the weight, she said, "I've come to help you on a few steps, father. I *wish* I was big, then I'd take it on my back altogether."

"It would crush you to the ground, yer such a bit of a lassie. The one who should have helped me is lazing about, I suppose. Has he——"

"Oh, father, I've something to tell you," interrupted Grace, gently. "Some one has come, and I thought you would like to know, and come round by the back with the potatoes, and get your hands washed. Guess who it is."

"I ~~needn't~~ guess long," he answered, turning off to the back of the cottage. "I suppose it is some one who thinks a little too much of his self. If folks come to my house they must just take us as we are, and if we are not good enough for them let them leave."

"Uncle George is very kind, I think you'll like him *this* time, father," said Grace, timidly.

"Hum!" rejoined her father. "Some folks can be very sweet when it suits them. Now open

the back door, and shut the kitchen." In spite of saying he wished to be taken "as he was," Mr. Campbell was very careful not to enter the back kitchen till the door between it and the front was closed. Having deposited his potatoes in one corner, he proceeded to wash his face and hands. Grace stood by in a dilemma. She wanted to help all parties, and she was very much afraid that in spite of her help all would go wrong. Her father would perhaps want his other coat, and it was upstairs where Grant was waiting! Her uncle would think it so strange to be left alone so long.

"Father, you are tired; I'll just get your coat if you like; it is upstairs, and that one is so hot." She didn't say dirty.

"Isn't this good enough?" he said, frowning, as he dried his hands; "I don't want to make a fuss for the sake of all the uncles in the place."

He did not mean to make his appearance in that old working coat, but nevertheless it was no part of his intention to yield the point so readily. "This'll do," he continued, looking at Grace's anxious face.

"You look so nice in the other one, father," said the little girl, coaxingly; "that one is so *hot* looking."

"Well, I'm kind o' heated after that turn, I may change it if you get it; not but what this other does as well." Grace did not wait another moment, she ran quickly up, and bidding Grant be still, returned with the coat and a black tie.

"Has Grant come in? because I've a question to settle with that young man," was Campbell's next remark. Is he in the kitchen?"

"No, father; but when he does come to you and promises not to be bad again, you will forgive him for *this* time—just this once."

"I'd like to hear Gruff promise that; I'll wait till then."

"And please don't call him Gruff, it angers him," said Gracie, pleadingly, growing bolder. "Father, we could be *so* happy if you'd forgive Grant, and he was a good boy."

"You bring too many 'if's' into your preaching," he replied, not unkindly, but in a cool kind of way that did not promise much. "*If* all the world were oatmeal, and all the seas were ink—What then?—I'll give him what I promised when I catch him. He must help to earn his porridge; and do you think I'll have him wearing boots like a gentleman, when he should be at work? Not I." The little girl said no more about it, but asked her father what he would have for his supper.

"Butter milk and bread and cheese," was the reply.

"I have some *nice* butter milk, Mrs. Clark churned this morning, and I thought you would like some, so I ran up to the farm and got a penny worth; I'm so glad, and perhaps Uncle George will take some; he can have my share, I don't care for it to-night, father."

"Very well, you can get it ready; I'm coming directly." Grace went into the kitchen, and spread the white cloth upon the table, then she reached down the prettiest jug with the picture of a prancing horse upon it, ready for the butter milk.

"Let me get down the glasses for you," said

her uncle, rising quickly as Grace jumped on a chair to reach them from the little press.

"Thank you, uncle; I put them out of the way for fear Grant should pick up one to fetch himself a drink of water." She did not say they usually used mugs, but it was so. To-night she wished very much to make the little table look as nice as possible, but after putting down the plates and the bread and cheese, she cast an anxious glance at her uncle, as if to read his thoughts.

"I wish I had some scones ready to-night; to-morrow I'm going to bake some. It's a real pity I didn't do them this morning. Do you like butter milk, Uncle George?"

"Very much, when I can get it," he replied, "but that is not often. Are you going to give me some to-night, because it is just what I'd like best. I was looking at that jug, too, and thinking what a pretty one it is. You are a capital little housekeeper, Grace, and have made the table look as nice and comfortable as possible. I had nearly forgotten something I should have been sorry to forget. See, little Mrs. Housekeeper, I have brought you one or two things to put in your larder," and opening his bag, Uncle George handed out a box containing some nice new laid eggs, two fat chickens, a cake, and a piece of bacon. "I hope the eggs are not broken."

"Not one; there's only one cracked, and I can put it in the scones if I may, Uncle George. How kind of you. They will be a treat; we don't get such things as these often—not chickens and cake."

"I'm glad you are pleased, Gracie. Now, my little housekeeper must not wear that anxious face

any more. I have something here for you and Grant, but I do not mean to give them to you till the morning, when we can have a little more talk together."

"You have given us enough, indeed, we don't need any more. I wonder if I'll be able to cook the chickens. I guess I'll ask Mrs. MacLean to tell me about it. I wish——" but here Gracie stopped short, and a rosy blush came over her face. "What do you wish?" asked her uncle, catching hold of her and drawing her on to his knee.

"I was going to say I wish father would take an egg to-night, I thought it might make him feel more cheery and happy if I had it ready for a surprise, but then I thought it would seem so strange to say it, for I ought to be asking *you* to have one."

"Get one ready by all means, dear, if he would like it. Is he coming soon?"

George Grant knew his brother-in-law well, and did not expect a hearty greeting from him; still, he could hardly help feeling his neglect and apparent indifference about his visit. As he asked Gracie this question she started up, saying, "Oh, uncle, he has found Grant; he has gone upstairs. I tried to get all his things, so he didn't need to go. Now he'll flog him, and I promised Grant I'd get him off. What will I do? Let me go and beg him off," and without another word she had opened the kitchen door and sprung up the stairs. As she did so the report of two boxes on the ear reached the lower region from above, and the words—"Now, mind that's a slight thing. The next time you take your own way and not mine,

you'll get something you'll never forget. *Now* will you wear your boots again for school in a hurry?"

As Grace entered the room, and put her little self between her father and Grant, saying not a word but looking at him beseechingly, his anger having spent itself a little, enabled him to say, "Had it not been for Grace here you would have got what I promised."

"Father, he *would* have told you he didn't mean to wear his boots without leave again. He was going to, weren't you, Grantie?" pleaded the little girl.

Grant had had time to repeat the words his uncle had asked him to, and to wonder what was meant by the "Lord's way," and to ponder over what his uncle said about "obeying his parents;" and then he had made up his mind if he possibly could to tell his father he would try and attend to his wishes about the boots in future; but his father had found him so suddenly, and spoken so suddenly, that Grant had no time even to think before first one box and then another on his ears nearly stunned him. In a moment the angry revengeful feelings were uppermost, and had not Grace come quickly on the scene and spoken so pleadingly, the angry feelings would have ended in angry words, and had his father commenced to flog him he would have kicked and struggled as usual, or have tried to run away a second time. Grant gave one glance at Grace's loving anxious face—his red cheeks and flashing eyes gave promise of a burst of passion, but something that he saw in his sister's face checked him for an instant. His eyes fell, his hand dropped, and she, taking advantage

of the moment's pause, sought to turn the thoughts of each if possible.

Putting one hand on Grant's arm, she said again, "*Remember*, Grant, what we said. Oh, *do* remember! you *were* going to tell father, and then he would be *sure* to think no more this time. Uncle George is down stairs, and do you know he has brought us something so nice, a present for all of us. Come and see it, but just tell father first."

"I was going," gasped Grant, "but he"—

"But he will *now*, father—he means it, don't you, Grant?" she said, earnestly looking from one to another.

"He doesn't mean any such thing," replied his father, who was really losing his sudden anger, as he gazed at the little peacemaker; but who felt just enough shame at the way he had let his own temper have free vent, to prevent him giving in and helping Grant to confess. He did not intend to punish him any more; but he could not let the children think that he believed in Grant's repentance. No, he must always have the last word, and his own way if possible.

"He *means* it, don't you, Grant?" and into his ear she whispered, "Remember mother's words."

"Yes, I do," replied Grant, in smothered tones.

"Then it is all right," exclaimed the little girl, hopefully, as her father turned on his heel, with a last warning to Grant, "to see and attend to it."

Their uncle had listened, with very mingled feelings, to what had gone on above. He had heard all; but judged it wisest not to interfere, unless the flogging commenced, though he was most sorry not to be able to speak for Grant. He met his brother-in-law as if he were not aware

of the affair, touching upon the recent sad event, and saying he had a few days at his disposal, and, with their father's consent, would see the children as much as possible. Much to John Campbell's relief, Mr. Grant told him he had taken lodgings in the village, and must now bid them good-night, as his landlady would be expecting him early. 'May I take the children over to the Loch to-morrow?' he asked.

"Yes, you can take them," was the reply, "as long as Grace leaves things straight, and gets back before I'm in. Mind that Grant behaves himself a bit better than he's done the day—he's only just escaped a sound floggin'." Then, as the children came down the stairs, he turned out at the back, to smoke his pipe, till his guest was gone.

"I'm glad you did what was right, Grant," said his uncle, as he bade him good-night. "You will not trouble your sister so again, I'm sure. Don't forget the little prayer, my boy." How handsome the boy looked, as he stood there (conflicting emotions working in his face), with his curly hair and bright dark eyes, and rosy cheeks! He will either stand firm for the right, or go headlong into evil. "O God, teach him Thy way," prayed his uncle.

"God bless you, Gracie," said her uncle, as he kissed her for good-night; "I'm coming for you to-morrow, as early as possible, so be all ready to go out with me both of you. I'm glad you helped your brother to-night. Mother would be very glad," he added, with kindling eye.

Even *he* did not know the strain that had been upon the little girl that day, especially the last



few minutes. It was no light thing to her to stand between father and brother. She did not know but any minute her father might have in his anger ordered her from the room. She never knew how these scenes would end, and now she was so glad for Grant, yet when that relief came, another feeling came with it, that utterly lonely feeling; she had no one to go to and get comfort from; her uncle was going away, and as yet she did not know enough of him to be quite unrestrained in his presence, and beyond all, she did not know the heart of God—that God is love, and waits to bless and to receive, as a Father, all who come to Him through the Saviour. She did not know Jesus as a *Friend*, and so that last word reminding her of her loss, was a touch too much. She had enough self-command to say, hurriedly,

“Have you no little prayer to teach me, Uncle George? I want one *so* badly,” and then covering her face with her hands, the sobs came fast, and the tears fell thick.

In a moment he had her on his knee, and waiting till she was quiet, said, very gently, “Yes, darling, say, ‘Teach me Thy *love*, O Lord.’ Jesus ‘gathers the lambs in His arms, and carries them in His bosom.’ That’s where He wants you to rest. Is it not a safe and happy place?—the bosom of the Good Shepherd.”

“Yes; thank you, Uncle George. It is just the kind of verse I want;” and little Grace went to bed and to sleep, with the prayer upon her lips, and dreamed that she had been lost in the wood, when the Good Shepherd found her, and took her up like a little lamb; and she, being tired and weary, fell asleep on His bosom.

CHAPTER XI.

AN EXCURSION WITH UNCLE GEORGE.



T'S going to be a nice day, Grant; come and see. I've been out to look," said Grace, pulling her brother outside the cottage. Their father was trudging away in the distance to his work; he was going to help to fell some trees not far from the Loch, and to superintend their removal. He had given the children permission to lock up the cottage, and take a holiday. He could not help himself, but he did not like it.

"How do you know it will be fine? It looks awful cloudy to me," replied Grant.

"Oh I know—I am sure it will turn out a good day. See if it does not. There is a dry fresh feel in the air, and the clouds are light and broken. Why, there is a tiny piece of blue sky! the very birds chirp like it, too, and the trees move so gently and quietly. I wonder when Uncle George will be here. You will come and help me, won't

you, Grant, for there are no lessons to-day, and we will have everything straight before he comes."

"Yes, I'll help, if you let me do the things I like," bargained Grant; "I don't like to help with beds or dishes."

Grace looked rather sober. "I thought you *would* have, just for once; it's tiresome making beds. See, Grantie, if you'll help me with them, we'll just work into one another's hands, and I'll let you get watching the scones bake, it is the day for them, and you can turn them on the girdle as they brown. We'll make them better than usual, 'cause Uncle George is here, and we'll take some with us to eat at the Loch. I mean to put one of the eggs in the scones."

A little more coaxing, and Grace gained her point. She often grew tired of making the beds; it was hard work for her little arms to turn the mattresses; but for some weeks she had had to do it alone, unless Grant gave a helping hand. Now they began to work in earnest. Grant could help very nicely when he pleased, and this morning he *did* please. He could not forget Grace's kindness on the past night; how she had so lovingly shielded him from blame. They swept and dusted, and made the beds, and dried the few dishes used. Grace whitened the doorstep, and rubbed up the brass handles, as her mother had taught her, and by eight o'clock all was neat and orderly. "Now, Grant, if you will clean the knives and our boots—for we must both wear our boots to-day—I will mix the scones."

"All right," said Grant, making rather a wry face; "I hope there's not many knives."

"Just four, that's not many. What would you

do if you was the boy over at Manor House; they sit down twenty to dinner sometimes, and use twice as many knives!"

"I *wouldn't* be. I'm going to be a sailor when I'm a man. Then I can go away, and do as I please."

"Oh, Grant, you'll *not*, there are only us two, and I'm sure you'll bide by me. Fancy me lying and listening to the wind as it roars round here some nights, and thinking of you being drowned perhaps. Besides, I think sailors ought to be real *good* men, there is so much danger for them, they might any time be drowned. Sailors ought to be quite ready to die."

"Sailors *can't* go to church, there arn't no churches on the sea," said Grant, with a tone of relief. He didn't like to sit still and not move, as he was made to at the kirk.

"I don't mean going to church, I don't think that makes us ready to die. Father always goes to kirk once a day, and old Mrs. M'Pherson next door went when she could, but I don't think she is ready to die. I don't know, but it is something I can't quite understand about. 'Trusting all to Jesus,' mother said; but I don't quite see what we have to trust. I mean to ask Uncle George about it."

"I don't see why you need trouble, you are a good kind of a lassie, Gracie; and children like us don't often die."

"They do *sometimes*, and we *might*; there was James Donald, you know he died of fever in the village, and little Jessie Leckie was smaller than me; but then, if God wants us to do His will, I would like to do it. It must be so nice to love

Him, and not be afraid like Jeanie. I felt so happy this morning praying those two little prayers."

"Which two?"

"Why, yours and mine." 'Teach me Thy love, O Lord;' and 'Teach me Thy way, O Lord.'"

"I had forgotten to say mine, but I'll do it before Uncle George comes—I promised him."

"Yes, do," said Grace. "Now, I've mixed this scone all right; I think there's soda and flour, and salt, and butter milk, and I'll put a little sugar and one egg. It will be as good as cake, Grant. I don't want to forget anything as I've done once or twice. *Then*, there was mother, and she helped me out of the scrape. Now, I know father would be angry if any was wasted. He gave me the flour before he left, and told me to mix them all right. We are to have potatoes and bacon to dinner. There are plenty of potatoes, and father gets them ever so cheap, so he says we can eat them to dinner and supper. I wish I had something nice for Uncle George, though. Why there are the chickens!"

"How will you cook them?" asked Grant, with his head on one side, brushing away at his boots.

"I mean to ask Mrs. MacLean, as we pass through the village, to tell me what to do. She will know. They used to have nice dinners when Mr. MacLean was alive."

"Now, Grace, I've done; and when you've shaped the scones, I've to put them on the girdle—you said so."

"So you will, Grant; don't they look pretty?" And reaching down the large iron girdle, she

made way for Grant to put them on and watch them brown. It was the part Grace liked best, but most willingly she gave it up to her brother, she was so glad to have him with her, safe and happy; as long as he was within the cottage with her, she had no fear of his being in mischief and bringing trouble on them all. She had a pure unselfish delight in seeing him attending to the cakes, and a very motherly feeling too—for had she not provided the pleasure?

After seeing them progressing favourably, Grace stooped down and pulled out a box from under the bed, and upon opening the lid she very carefully lifted out her new plain black frock and Grant's black suit. Very homely they both were, but a new dress was quite a novelty to Grace—her mother had generally cut her own down for her little girl—it would have been a great pleasure to her had it come under different circumstances, but now the sight caused that choking feeling in her throat to come back again. It reminded her of her mother lying pale and ill, and saying to her a day or two before she died, "You will need a new black frock, Gracie, when I am gone. Mrs. Benson will make it for you. It needn't cost much. Just a plain one, dear."

It was always "the cost," "the cost!" Grace knew how it had kept her poor mother down. And all the while many a sovereign was finding its way into the little savings bank. With a very sober face she laid them both down on the bed. She felt she could throw herself beside them, and weep for the one who was gone, but happily for her the scones had to be looked at, and as one or two were rather heavily browned, she was obliged

to watch Grant narrowly, and this turned the current of her thoughts.

Where a ray of light can enter, a child's hope can find a way, and a few minutes after her spirits were light again. "These two scones are rather too much done, Grant; but never mind, I'll pack them in a separate paper for myself. I rather like them well done."

"Do you like them *burnt*? I don't," added Grant. As Grace could not say she did either, she answered nothing—she did not like other people to get the burnt ones, she would much rather take them herself. She was saved any explanation by a tap at the door, and with a flash of pleasure upon her face ran to open it.

"Are my little folks all ready for a day's ramble?" asked Mr. Grant, kissing the one and patting the other on the head, "because I am, and I shall want two little guides—not knowing the country well!" He had noticed the patient, tired look on little Grace's face the day before and was anxious to give her a change of scene. An instrument that is overstrained either breaks or gets out of tune. The mind of a sensitive child will not long bear a continuous and heavy strain; when this is the case a discord is left that may jar all life long; or if sweetness of tone is left, the little frame gradually succumbs. Always thinking of others before himself, Uncle George did not now yield to his own inclination for retirement after his sorrow in losing a sister once so near and dear, but strove to comfort and cheer the little ones. "And what is Grant after? Baking, I do believe, at this early hour. Who has been in

cleaning and clearing up?" he asked, looking round with a smile.

"We did it, Grace and me," answered Grant.

"We wanted to be ready when you came," said Grace, modestly.

"Well, it is *quite* a surprise; I was afraid we would have to wait some time till things were all straight. Now little housekeeper, what are your plans?" he asked, putting his arm round Gracie, and looking at her with kindly beaming eyes. "Don't trouble your head about provisions, there is a good sized village just before we come to the Loch, and we'll get some luncheon there. If you had any biscuits or bread," he said, glancing at the scones, "we might take a little, and two or three boiled eggs."

"I have the scones on purpose, if you would like them," said Grace, with a happy light in her eyes.

"The *very* thing, you could not have done better, and now we will lock up and be off."

Grace packed a little bag with the scones and eggs, and two or three slices of bread and butter; and after dressing themselves as neatly as possible, the little party set off. Their uncle was consulted about the chickens, and he thought it a good plan to enlist Mrs. MacLean's services, so they stopped at her house on their way through the village, and she readily promised that Jeanie should come on the morrow, and help Grace to cook them, and accepted with pleasure their invitation for her to take dinner with them. She, herself, was too busy to leave home.

"I am glad I've seen Mrs. MacLean," said their uncle, as they walked along; "she seems a true,

kind-hearted woman. I hope she will prove a kind friend to you."

"So she is, uncle, ~~she~~ *she* is very kind and good, and Mrs. MacLean loves her Bible, and talks about what she reads in it. She——"

"She what, Gracie?"

"I was going to say she loves God, and it must be *that* that makes her happy, because she has had a heap of trouble."

"Do you know, Gracie, it is not *our* love to God that makes us happy, it is such poor, imperfect love after all. It is knowing His love for us, and believing that, that brings peace and happiness, because when He loved us, we were far from Him, and He sent His Son to die for us, and bring us near Him. When He shows us His love and we believe it, and rest in the Saviour He has provided, we are happy—*then* we learn to love Him *because* He first loved us. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, it seems very plain; it is just what I want to know about. Tell me again please, Uncle George."

"I will, dear, and when we have walked on a little, and found a nice resting place, I have something to show you, and *something* to give you, and *something* to tell you."

"I think this is one of the nicest days I ever knew, Uncle George," said the little girl, simply, looking up in his face, and slipping her hand into his. A fast friendship was quickly forming between them, and a happy confidence was being established.

He smiled down upon her, giving a look of perfect understanding. Her spirits, so kept down

by sorrow of late, were rising to their natural level; the fresh, exhilarating morning air made her feel so happy and buoyant, that her step grew light and quick, added to which she felt she had found a friend—a sympathising one too, and one who loved her dear mother.

“This is a pretty road before us,” he said; “can you find your way to the Loch quite easily.”

“Oh, yes; we used often to go with father’s dinners last summer. We’ve not been much lately, but I know every step of the way, and almost all the trees by the way; don’t you, Grant?”

“Yes, I could go if you blinded me, I think,” he answered.

“Is it not beautiful, now the sun bursts out?” said Grace; “see how it lights up the trees in that little wood yonder, and makes the meadows seem to smile.”

“It *is* beautiful, and the mountains beyond look so grand with the Loch lying calm and still below with its heavy shadows. How long does it take you to walk there?”

“About three quarters of an hour if we go pretty quick, but when I pluck flowers or brackens, or leaves, of course I’m longer, and I nearly always do, I cannot pass them by,” said Grace, running to the side of the road. “These little silvery leaves are so pretty, and if we look carefully when we cross the fields, we will find some violets, perhaps, and pretty little yellow flowers, I call them Canaries, I don’t know their right name.”

“Well, take your time and pluck as many

flowers as you will, and then we will sit down to rest a little."

"I want to find the very bonniest I can get for you, Uncle George. I will tack them—but I'll *not* tell you what I'll do, it would be better to surprise you, if you will let me know the kind of leaves and flowers you like best."

So as they sauntered along, Grace plucked her flowers and leaves, sometimes helped by Grant, but he was mostly engaged in trying to find a stout stick from the hedge, and then busy peeling it. After a while they came upon a little brook running through the meadows, and over it a tiny bridge. Close by, with a hillock all around, was a large tree; the fresh bright leaves were bursting out all over, and a most lovely view lay before the little party as they halted for a minute.

"This is the place for us to sit down and rest," cried the children in a breath. "And if you are hungry we'll eat a scone," said Grace, looking towards her uncle.

"By all means, I am quite ready for them, and very anxious to try what sort of a cook you are, Mrs. Housekeeper," said he, throwing himself down while the children placed themselves beside him.

"Will you have egg, and bread and butter, or scone?" asked Grace, demurely, keeping the parcel of burnt ones out of the way.

"You mustn't expect the scones to be *very very* good, because you see I'm only a little girl, and it's only a few months since I began to make them."

"If they taste as good as they look they *will be very very* good," said her uncle, reassuringly.

Gracie smiled up in his face, and handed him the very best of the number, and after giving Grant one, she quickly withdrew one of the damaged scones from the paper for herself, and turning half round to the mountains ate it in silence.

Mr. Grant perceived the action, and looking at the little boy, asked: "Did you burn some of your cakes, like King Alfred?"

"I *don't* know about King Alfred; but *I* let two cakes burn a little, and Gracie said she should have them. I don't believe she really likes burnt scones, only she always eats the worst herself. She don't like father to see them, and she durstn't waste them—we always get two for our dinner."

"Oh, Grant, you funny boy, you talk about what you don't know," said Grace, with heightened colour. "Uncle George doesn't understand these things; the scones are well enough, and I can take the best done if I please."

"The *most* done," replied her uncle, with a smile. "Give me that little parcel by your side, Gracie."

She passed it at once; and giving a glance at it, he put it in his pocket, saying, "He liked burnt scones *as well as she did*," and made her take one of the very best in the basket.

"Now, since you have given me a present, I want to give you one," and diving into his big pocket he pulled out a small parcel, with Grant's name on it, and put it on his knees.

With eager fingers Grant opened it, and displayed a pretty neat-looking little Testament, with a brown cover and gilt edges.

"This is a fine one!" he exclaimed, turning it

over and back again. "Is it really for me, Uncle?"

"Look inside and see."

Opening at the fly-leaf the little boy saw some writing, but he could not read it.

"Gracie, you try," he asked.

She took the book, and read slowly and carefully:—

GRANT CAMPBELL,
FROM HIS UNCLE GEORGE.

"Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."—1 Peter iii. 18.

"He was wounded for our transgressions."—Isaiah liii. 5.

"Oh, Grant, how beautiful! Think of having such a book to yourself, you will be proud! And those words—are they in the Bible, Uncle George? I never heard them before." And Gracie read them through again, more carefully even than the first time. "And, I don't quite understand them. What is 'just'; and what is 'transgression'?"

"The Just means the Holy One, the Son of God, perfect and spotless as He was. He saw our guilty ruined race, He knew the men and women and little children in this world were sinners, and had wandered from God, and He—the Just One—came down from that glorious world above the bright blue sky you see over your heads, down to this stricken, sinful world of darkness, and took the sinner's place—who was the unjust—and bore sin's heavy load. He was wounded for *our* transgressions or sins—for our acts of disobedience. *He died for us.* Now, any who come to Him, who believe in Him, and

trust in Him, are brought to God, are saved. God will not punish them for their sins if they believe in Jesus, who was punished *instead* of them."

With eager upturned face, Grace listened to every word, and weighed every word that fell from her uncle's lips. The ground was all ready to receive the seed, all ready to be watered by a refreshing shower, and then to bear fruit. He saw that his words were not lost upon one of his little listeners. Forgetful entirely of herself, and anxious to lay hold of the secret of true happiness, she was entirely absorbed.

"I want that—to be brought to God, Uncle George, and I've tried and I can't get," she said wistfully; "but not *that* way, I never tried *that* way. I wish the words you say were written down, so I could read them till I got them in here," she said—pressing her hands to her heart—"and understood them all. Where did *you* learn it?"

"From God's own word, Gracie. See here, darling, *you* have not had my little keepsake yet; it may help you a little. I hope you will like it as well as Grant's." It was a small text-book, in a dark blue morocco cover and gilt edges; and for every day of the year there was a text of scripture and a verse of hymn.

With flushed cheeks and trembling hands Grace examined her treasure, and spoke her thanks with eyes sparkling with bright witnesses of her happiness.

"You have your mother's Bible," he said.

"Yes, and is my name in this too?"

"Look and see."

And Grace read—

FOR GRACE CAMPBELL,
FROM HER UNCLE.

“The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him, and the Lord shall cover him all the day long.”—Deut. xxxiii. 12.

“The beloved of the Lord,” said Grace gently, with a questioning look.

“Those who believe in His love are beloved of Him. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. If you believe God loved you—little Grace Campbell—as He says He did, and gave Jesus to die for you, you belong to Him, He gives you everlasting life.”

“May I?” asked Grace.

“He invites you.”

“How do I know it is all for me?”

“I will tell you,” and taking Grant’s Testament he read—“‘When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for—for the ungodly.’ Are you described there, are you *without* strength?”

There was silence for a minute or two. (Grant ran away, finding the conversation not quite interesting enough to him), and Grace slowly said,—

“I cannot move towards God one bit, uncle; I’ve tried it, and it’s no good.”

“Then you are without strength, by nature far from Him. Oh what a joyful thought that his Son can bring you to Him! The Good Shepherd carries the wandering lamb right to the Father’s arms. Yield yourself to Him, the blessed Saviour, little Grace!”

Gracie's eyes seemed to say, "I would like to," and as her uncle went on to tell more of the love of that One who called the little ones unto Himself, she put her hand into his and said, "I do believe He loves me now." They sat on under the trees for some time, and Mr. Grant told his little niece more of the "old story," ever new, while her beaming face testified that she had, "as a little child," received the glad tidings into her heart.

The sky was blue, the birds were just beginning their spring songs, the grass was fresh and green, but all seemed brighter and better than ever to little Grace, as, with her hand fast locked in her uncle's, her flowers and leaves for the time forgotten, she walked quietly and happily along. Her little text-book was safely folded in the paper and bestowed in her uncle's pocket, to be examined at the next resting place, for the ground was not as dry as in summer, and it was not safe to sit long.

At the village beside the Loch the children were treated to a cup of hot coffee and sandwiches, and most happy they were. It was a day long to be remembered, for after they had walked by the side of the water, and Grant had made dozens of ducks and drakes, and they had admired the mountains to their hearts' content, their uncle hired a light cart to take them more than halfway back. Then the text-book was opened, and the road home was beguiled by looking at the date of their birthdays and reading the text for the day.

"Is it difficult to love the Lord now?" asked her uncle with a smile at Gracie as she turned up her birth-day text, and was conning it with delight, "The Father Himself loveth you."

"No, no, uncle! it seems as if it would be a

delight to love Him ever so. Now I know He gave Jesus to die for me. It is so good," and she hugged her text-book.

"Will you promise me one thing?" he asked.

"I'll try," answered Grace cautiously. "I will," she said earnestly as she saw his kind face beaming upon her.

"Will you read a text every day. Don't be afraid to use the little book, it is strong and will last many years if needed."

"Yes, I will, and it will help me to follow Him," she added quickly, as her eyes caught sight of that little text, "Follow Me." "It is the best and dearest little book that ever was."

"It is a safe and a happy path to 'follow Jesus,' but not always easy. We must deny ourselves if we would follow the Master. He pleased not Himself. *Things* will be *against* us oftentimes, but *He* is always *for* us."

"But it will not be so hard when we know Jesus loves us, will it, uncle?"

"That is our help," he answered.



CHAPTER XII.

TONY TODD'S ACCIDENT.



THE little party alighted from their conveyance, just before they reached the village, to walk the rest of the way. Grace and Grant were known by many of the villagers, and pitiful looks were cast on them, as, attired in their simple mourning, they walked one on either side of their uncle.

They passed through the principal street, with its usual run of little shops. There was Hunter the grocer's, a kind of general provision shop, patronised by the few well-to-do people of the village.

Indeed, the gentry at the Manor House and Sunnyside Cottage bought some articles there occasionally, though they generally sent into town for what they required; and Higgins did quite a brisk little trade for a month or so in the summer, when some of the townsfolk came to stay at the neighbouring farm houses for change of air during the hot weather.

The children passed by Mrs. MacGowan's little shop too, where their mother had always dealt for oatmeal, flour, peasemeal, and sugar, &c. At the end of the village nearest their home stood two or three little cottages. They each had a central door, with a room on either side. A family lived in each room.

The one cottage was untidy and dirty looking, the other had a more respectable appearance—indeed it wore an air of comfort from the outside at least. There was a little white curtain at the window, and two or three pots of flowers inside.

"Little Tony lives there," said Grace to her uncle, pointing to the cottage at a little distance. "Mother knew Mrs. Todd, and used to go and see her before she was very ill. She is a widow, and goes out to work, and has to leave little Tony alone—sometimes she locks him in, and sometimes a neighbour looks after him a bit. Tony's sister, Bella, is rather wild; mother never let me go with her, and she works at a mill. Her mother don't like it, but she will. Hark! I think that's Tony, he's hurt or something," cried Grace, as they neared the cottage. "Oh, what is it? Do come and see," she added, drawing her uncle towards the door.

He hastened his steps as he heard a little child screaming in distress, and quickly opening the outer door knocked at the inner, and as it was not opened immediately he turned the handle and they entered the room. It was neatly furnished and very clean. In one corner in the wall was the bed, covered with a clean patchwork quilt and a little curtain drawn halfway across. The wooden chairs had been scrubbed as clean as soap

and water could make them, and little ornaments here and there on the mantleshelf and wall gave the room an air of comfort. But over the grate, and upon the little rug in front of the fire, a great deal of water had been spilt, and close by stood a little boy of about three years old, crying piteously, and holding his arm, while he stamped in pain. Beside him stood a girl about thirteen years of age, with uncombed hair, and untidy garments, and bare feet. Her face was red with anger, and she appeared to have been stopped in the midst of administering a beating.

Mr. Grant stepped forward, and said that hearing the cries he had been afraid some child was hurt and unable to help itself, and so had come in to see if he could render aid. While speaking he approached little Tony, and found the child to be severely scalded on the arm, and in much pain.

"Bring me some soap and boiling water," he said to the girl, but Grace sprang forward and supplied him with them.

"Are you this little boy's sister?" he asked, whilst he quickly softened the soap and laid thick lathers on the little arm—"and how did this happen?"

"No, I be'nt his sister," replied the girl. "Glad I'm not; he's been a heap o' trouble to me, spillin' the water on the floor for me to dry." She appeared to have no pity whatever for the little fellow who was still continuing to cry with the pain. "He deserved a gude beatin' for it," she continued, "and that's what he'll need to get."

"Is that what you were giving him when we came in?" asked Mr. Grant sternly, looking at

the child's bare shoulders, where unmistakeable marks of recent blows were to be seen.

"She was beatin' me 'cause I tried to get a wee drop water in my little cup, and spilled it on my arm," sobbed Tony.

"Poor wee boy, it's a bad pain, but it will soon be better; this will do it good in the meantime, and we will get it dressed with something else in a little."

"Where do you live, and who sent you to take care of this poor child?" asked Mr. Grant of the girl.

"It ain't my business to mind 'im," she replied saucily; "Mrs. Fowlis reckons to do it, but she was engaged, so she sent me."

"Show me where Mrs. Fowlis lives; and Gracie, watch the wee boy till I come back, dear." The girl reluctantly led the way, partly cowed by the resolute manner of her questioner, and a little bit afraid of what he was going to do.

"The child must not be left to your care," he said. "It is a mercy he was not scalded to death. Do you know it is a great thing to be trusted with a child, and you have been very careless and unkind?"

She replied, sulkily, that he was a "fractious wean, allus doin' what he shouldna."

"At least, when he was hurt you might have tried to help him; it looks very bad that you should have been beating a little defenceless child, suffering from a severe burn. What do you do, and where do you live?"

"I mostly does what I likes, and ain't partickler where I stays. Any one as wants a message girl or a bit help, knows *me*."

Mr. Grant privately thought he would not give much for her help. She was evidently Irish, and quick tempered, perhaps brought up in poverty, discord, and evil. "That's where Mrs. Fowlis lives, but you needn't tell on me," said the girl stopping short.

"I don't want to bring you into any trouble, but I must get help for the little boy, and you must not be left with him again without his mother's leave," replied Mr. Grant.

While speaking to Mrs. Fowlis, the girl made off. "Ah, I shouldna have left the wee laddie to her; ye don't say he's burnt himself," she said, flinging the suds from her hands, for she was washing; "his mother wull be put aboot, but ye see I was that busy, and I canna mind the bairn as I'd like. Ye ken I've a heap to dae mysel. But I'll come the now."

Following Mr. Grant, she came to little Tony, now wailing quietly over his pain on Gracie's knee. Her heart was full of pity and indignation, and she had been drawing from him the story of his wrongs as best he could tell it. They left him now to Mrs. Fowlis's care, until his mother (who, it appeared, was not far away), could be found to take him to the doctor; and, promising to come in again soon and hear how the boy was, they hastened away to be home before the children's father arrived for tea.

After the meal was finished, they were sitting round the fire showing their presents to their father, and telling him about the happy day they had spent. Their uncle had left them only a few minutes, when there was a rap at the door. Grant rose to open it—wondering who it could be, unless

their uncle had forgotten something, and returned for it—when he encountered Mrs. Todd, or *Mistress* Todd, as the married women are called in Scotland.

She had such a Scotch tongue, that I am sure my little English readers could not understand one half she said, so I must make it easy by using a great many English words.

She appeared much “put about” and excited, and after John Campbell told her to be seated, she explained her errand. She was much vexed at Tony’s accident, and said she had been in sore trouble for a long while to know what to do with him when she was at work, for she had no one to leave to take care of him. Her girl Bella was at the mill, which was, they knew, half a mile beyond their cottage, and it would not do to take her off work to see to him, indeed she would not do it whether her mother wished it or not, and she could ill spare the wage, for she was but a poor widow; but she *did* care for Tony, he was her “wee bairnie,” and like his dead father, and he was being tossed about, and either running wild or shut up at home, and now after what had happened she’d be “afeard” to leave him. “Now, I dinna much like to ask ye, but ye can say me nay if ye please, Mr. Campbell, but wee Tony is so set on yer little Grace, and I thought may be it would be company for her, and I might make it worth yer while, by paying her a trifle for pocket money, and doing yer bit washin’ with oor ain. Ye’ll have to get a woman to do it, for Grace here is too small, and I’d do it and give her a shilling to herself every week if you’d agree for Bella to leave wee Tony as she passes in the morning and call for him at night. What do

you say, Grace? He's a stoot, bonnie wee bairn, though his mither says it. A bit wilful at times, but yer winnin' ways 'ull bring him round, and make a man of him." She looked from one to the other. Grace's eyes flashed pleasure, and she flushed with delight at the thought; she was passionately fond of little children, and the prospect of having one to care for all by herself, who would cheer her solitude, was a happy idea, but she kept quiet to hear her father's word about it.

"He'd do to play horses with me in the back-yard," shouted Grant.

"Hold your tongue," said his father; and Grant pouted his lips and retired.

Campbell had been secretly wondering who he could get to help in those matters that Grace was too young to superintend, and privately groaning over the prospect of the extra expense, so that this suggestion was not altogether an unpleasant one. True, he did not want another child about, but Tony would be away when he returned or just about leaving, and it would be a good way to get the washing done, and Grace would have a something to help her with her clothes. "How about his food?" he asked.

"Oh, he'd get his 'parritch' afore he started, and carry his bit dinner with him as his sister did hers, and get a drap o' tea when he got home."

"Well, I really think it would do," said Campbell, "provided he doesn't break the things in the house; ye'll have to mind that, Grace." As to whether the burden would be too great for his little daughter he did not stop to consider. It was not much in his line to consider other people—even his own children. True, he would not do

them any harm if he knew it, or allow others to do so, still he did not think much about the little trials or difficulties others might have to contend with. He was selfish.

"But, what does Gracie say to it?" asked Mrs. Todd.

"Oh, let him come," she answered, with a beaming face. "I like the wee boy so—he put his wee arms round my neck to-day. I will take care of him, Mrs. Todd."

So it was settled, and the mother went home well content; and little Grace thanked God, and went to sleep, with her text-book beneath her pillow.



CHAPTER XIII.

YOUNG HOUSEKEEPERS.



HE eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." So read little Grace from her text-book next morning. "What beautiful words! can they really be for me?"

"Yes, Uncle George says all the promises are for those who believe in Jesus, and I believe in Him now. He died for me when I had no strength. I'm so glad that is in the Bible about 'no strength,' because I hadn't any, and it is so beautiful to think that Jesus loved us and did it all. I never thought before that all the dreadful pain he suffered was for me—to save me." Little Grace read her verse once more. "It's more beautiful to think of each time;—'everlasting arms'—they never get tired. Mother's did, she could not hold me long."

"It will be sweet when I'm wearied of a night to lie down, 'and underneath the everlasting

arms;' and when Grant is troublesome I can tell God, and He'll be my Refuge. Oh, I'm so glad that Uncle George ever came! And, with a joyful face, little Grace prepared her father's breakfast, and even infected him with a little gladness, for he waved his hand back to her as he walked away—a most unusual thing for him. "If only father *knew* God had loved him, and done such wonderful things for him, it would make him happy too," thought Grace; "I would like to tell him, but then I'm only a little girl, and he mightn't like it."

"I wonder if God gives little girls anything to do for Him? I'll ask Uncle George. I wish he'd come," she added aloud.

"Who do you wish would come?" asked a pleasant voice close by.

"Ah, it was just *you*," answered Grace, with heightened colour.

"And what do you want of me, Mrs. House-keeper?"

"Oh, I want to tell you something, and ask something, please, if you will sit in the arm-chair."

"And take you on my knee?" he added, drawing her there.

"I'm very comfortable here," she said, with a smile; "it's about Tony, poor wee Tony," and Grace proceeded to tell her story of last night. "Now, what do you think, uncle?"

"Does father quite agree?"

"Yes, he said it would be a good plan. Don't you think so?"

"Well," replied he, after a pause, "there are *pros* and *cons*."

"What are they?" asked Grace, with wide-open eyes.

"Things *for* and *against*," he replied.

"I don't see anything *against*," said Grace; shaking her head gravely.

"It will be nice for you to have company sometimes, and nice to have the washing done for you, but I'm afraid it will be a great burden on one so young as you. Little children are very troublesome sometimes, and you have Grant to see to, it *may* make you forget to be so careful over him. You will need to ask the Lord for daily strength and patience, Gracie; and I was going to have asked father to let you and Grant come and stay with me and grandmother—it may prevent that."

"Oh, I would like," said Grace.

"We will see. When is Tony to come?"

"On Monday first," she answered, more soberly.

"I want my little niece to try and commit all her ways to the Lord, and go to Him for help continually. Are you quite happy, Grace? Quite sure He is your Saviour, and loved you and died for you."

She answered with a bright happy look, though with fast filling eyes, and an earnest "Oh, yes, quite sure. The Bible says it."

"And the Bible is God's word," he added.

"I want to ask you if God gives little girls like me anything to do for Him, uncle? I was just wishing He did."

"Yes, indeed, all who are washed in the Saviour's blood, and His own little lambs. He is so gracious as to give the feeblest some work to do. There is your own brother Grant to win by love and

kindness. To act so carefully before him, and let your light shine that he may be brought to the Saviour. Then there is father—you may, perhaps, get him to read God's word for himself, or by your gentleness and love lead him to long after better things—above; and *then*—if God sends little Tony, you will have a little child to teach the Saviour's love."

"All that, it seems—too good—too much for *me*," she said, in a very low tone.

'You could do *nothing* without His help," said her uncle.

"I know—you remember 'without strength,'" she said, with a smile. "It's *all* Jesus, is it not?"

Many little talks had Grace with her uncle the next few days, and very much did he help her on the path her little feet were beginning to tread. He had thought it would be a nice change for both the children to spend a month or two with his parents, and mentioned it to their father, but he was evidently fully determined that they should not accept the invitation. He had his own reasons for this, and would not let his brother-in-law know them, but he obstinately refused to let them go—simply saying it would do them no good, and he could not spare Grace. He liked to show his power over the children, and it gratified him to use his authority, and know their uncle could not gainsay it. Mr. Grant had now only one day longer to stay, and then he must journey south, and it might be some time before he could see the little ones again; but he committed them to a loving Father who, he knew, would care for them.

The day after the little excursion to the Loch, Jeanie came as she promised, to help Grace to cook the fowls, and they had much enjoyment in the preparations. One was roasted for that day's dinner, and the other was boiled ready to be heated for the next day, and so give Grace no trouble. Grant was sent to the garden for one of the best cabbages, and a handful of parsley to make a little sauce, for Mrs. MacLean had given Jeanie instructions to do it all very nicely; so the two girls did their best, and grew quite merry over the cooking. They scorched their faces at the fire till they were like rosy-cheeked apples, turning the roasting fowl and watching the other to see it did not boil too fast. They were very anxious over the gravy, fearful lest it should not be so good as it ought, and it was quite a question as to how much flour should be sprinkled in, and how much salt. With white aprons on and rosy cheeks, they were discussing the question, while a savoury smell pervaded the kitchen, when there was a tap at the door, and in walked Mr. Grant.

"Now I am just in time to be let into the secrets of roasting a chicken," he said, as he laid down his hat and stick. "Surely you two experienced housekeepers are not in any difficulty. What is Grace looking so solemn about?"

"I really don't know how much flour to put into the gravy, uncle," said Gracie, "and Jeanie is as bad as I am; but perhaps you can tell us."

"Well, really now I don't think I should have put in any at all," he replied, laughingly, "but since you mention it, I fancy I've seen your grandmother shaking a little over a joint."

"Well, *we'll* try shaking a little over," answered

Grace; "I dare say we must not put much. Fancy Uncle George knowing about such things! I believe he knows everything, Jeanie," said Grace, laughingly.

"What are you going to do with this?" he asked of Jeanie, who was chopping parsley.

"It's for the sauce; but I think you'll not enjoy your dinner so much if you see it cooked," she answered, smilingly.

"Well, but what about the cooks then? I hope *they* are going to enjoy their dinner."

"Oh, it does not matter so much about us. You are English, and English folks must have good dinners," said Grace, from the side of the roaster. Uncle George laughed heartily. "You mistake greatly, young people," he said. "I can't have you take all this trouble for *me*."

"Oh, but we like it; it's fun to have our hands full, and if you will go and take a little walk, Uncle George, and get a good appetite, you'll find all ready in—half an hour, Jeanie?"

"Fully that; say three quarters."

"Very well; I see I'm not needed any longer," he answered, laughing, "so good bye for the present, Mrs. Cooks; I'll not be too late at any rate," and taking his hat and stick, he prepared to start. "Where is Grant?"

"Oh, he's at school, and will be home in half an hour."

"Well, perhaps I'll meet him and bring him back."

"You won't like," said Grace, hesitating and colouring.

"Won't like; why not?" he asked.

"Because father makes him go to school without his boots and stockings, and I thought maybe

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you wouldn't care about it, walking beside him like that."*

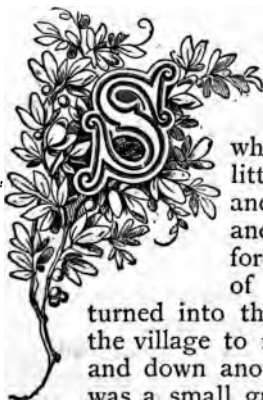
"If Grant can go so, I can walk with him, dear; so good-bye for the present," he said, waving his hand.

* Children of the lower classes in Scotland, with good clothes, go to school without shoes and stockings. Men earning good wages let most of their children run barefoot in the summer.



CHAPTER XIV.

UNCLE GEORGE AND THE SCHOOL BOYS.



O, while Jeanie and Grace were clearing the kitchen for dinner and setting the table, Mr. Grant rambled for a little while in the wood, watching the little birds busy with their nests, and noticing all the pretty shoots and buds which were being put forth on every side. A burst of sunshine greeted him as he turned into the road and walked towards the village to meet Grant, up one little hill and down another. At the foot of the hill was a small group of boys eagerly talking. So busy were they in conversation, that they did not notice his approach; one or two barefooted laddies were walking backwards talking to the rest. The wind carried their voice towards Mr. Grant, and he quickly discerned Grant's among them.

"Ye've been leathered three times the day, Gruffie," said one.

"I'll not stand it again. I've a mind to run

away. It was a shame; I was no worse than Bob MacIndoe."

"You'd better gang awa wi' us, we're off on a spree, Monday first; the morn is a holiday, ye ken."

"Gruff daurna, he's afraid o' his faither," said the first speaker, giving him a little shove. In a moment Grant's quick blood and temper showed themselves; though smaller than his companion, he proved there was not much fear about him, by driving such a sudden and violent blow that he sent the boy sprawling in the dusty road. "Call me Gruff if you dare," he said.

It was the boy Fern, whose mother had so enraged poor Grant before, who now found himself in the dust. Of course the boys laughed at his downfall, while one or two called out, "Give it him, Fern;" and others said, "Serve him richt, Grant; gie him anither."

Fern scrambled up and flew at Grant, who was prepared to receive him with clenched fists and crimson face, when a hand was laid on his shoulder and another grasped his extended arm.

"You must not fight," said his uncle, and lifting the hand he had laid on Grant's shoulder, he grasped Fern's arm. "Boys, boys, how foolish you are, to fight for so slight a thing. Wait, reserve your blows, and fight for a better cause."

The boys, with their angry faces, glanced up at the quiet determined one of Mr. Grant. Their hands fell, but the angry expression remained. "He called me names," said Grant. "He shoved me in the dirt," grumbled Fern.

"Well you were both to blame, so you had better get over your quarrel and shake hands."

They both looked as if this were very far from their thoughts.

"You had no right to taunt Grant, by calling him hard names," he added, looking at Fern; "and *you*, Grant, what were you thinking of, to drive the lad such a blow; had he struck his head on a stone it might have been a serious thing."

Both the lads looked a little ashamed and dropped their eyes, while their companions closed round, ready to turn the affair into ridicule, or watch the end of it, as the case might be.

"I don't wonder you felt inclined to fight after taking the first step," Grant's uncle went on. "The Evil One tempted you—without a moment's resistance you gave in—he conquered, and had I not been here you would have gone on in his service, till one or other would not have had a fit face to present at home. Do you know that the master you lads are serving, when you act so, is not worthy of you, but he will pay you wages—as sure as you serve him he'll pay you wages. Now, come a little way along the road with me, boys," he added, to the group, "and we'll have a little talk about it. This is your road and mine too." Most assented, and drew closer, one or two looked sheepish, and one suddenly burst away with a laugh, and a rude remark.

"Never heed him, I've a story to tell you," Mr. Grant went on, "and after that I've something to give you;" and drawing the seven boys round him in the middle of the road, they trooped slowly along.

"Well, now, what do you think the wages will be that your master will pay you if you go on so. It's a sad story, boys, and I can tell you of a far

better Master who will pay better wages. 'The wages of sin is death.' And Satan will draw you on from one evil to another if you listen to him, till it all ends in death—death for ever in his place, for anger, malice, evil-speaking, all come from him. Now, I will tell you of One who is waiting for you to serve Him. Do you know who? No less a One than the Lord of Glory, who died for you—Jesus, our Saviour. He, too, will pay his servants wages, a rich reward. He first gives all who come to Him eternal life, and then He will reward them in His glorious home for ever, for every act they do for Him—even for giving a cup of cold water in His name. Now, tell me," said Mr. Grant, looking at the boys, "Is it not worth to turn from the evil and turn to *Him*? He wants to bless you. His arms are open to receive you, for He died for you, and His precious blood can cleanse away every spot."

Perhaps never in their lives had the little boys been spoken so to before, and what a different effect it had on different ones. Mr. Grant saw at a glance the two or three attentive listeners, who were really impressed, at least for the moment, who forgot, for the time being, to think of their companions in their eagerness to hear such strange news. Strange, because, though they might hear of God and His truth in their school occasionally, it was not brought home to their consciences, and perhaps for the first time they felt they were sinners and desired for the moment something better. A very vague feeling, a fleeting one too perhaps, yet the arrow struck home as he went on to tell them a little story, and to speak of the love of God, and to urge them in their early

days to start on the narrow path which leads to everlasting happiness. The heart follows the eye, and the feet follow where the heart leads. One look to Christ and the heart cannot help longing after Him. One look at the crucified One! Bleeding, dying out of love to His enemies! One look to the glorified One! Risen triumphant, the work well done, inviting "whosoever will, to come!"

So Hal Gilgower and Willie Brown felt while he spoke a strong desire to "do what the gentleman said"—Hal, the wilful, only boy of the blacksmith, and Willie, the widow's son; while another listened solely from curiosity, the flight of a bird, the sight of a strange object taking off his attention. Two others were half inclined to turn the whole thing to fun and make off, as soon as the first minute had passed,—a nudge of the elbow, almost a look from one to the other would have done it, had it not been for the promise of a gift. The two culprits also were feeling very differently. Grant, who really loved his uncle, was sorry he had caught him fighting, and was much taken up with wondering whether he would care for him any more, and whether he had heard he had got two "leatherings"; so the little seed was choked that time, and could not fall in far enough, there being no depth of earth. Yet, while his uncle spoke, it seemed very solemn, and he felt sorry, and something reminded him of his mother, and made him feel very like choking, but his eye had not been raised above the things down here.

The boy Fern did not try to listen; revengeful feelings filled his heart, and he vowed he would

pay Grant out yet. He dared not show what he felt, for he was after all a coward; but the fowls gathered up the seed as it was sown. Satan and his wicked angels are ever on the watch to try to spoil the good; to devour the seed and snatch it away, and put something bad in its place—and so evil unkind thoughts were harboured in the boy's mind, and there was no room for Christ.

Mr. Grant read the young faces around him pretty well; he was used to boys, and accustomed to speak to them, and deeply interested in their welfare; and as he reached the spot where two roads met, he was about to halt, thinking some might turn off here, when one boy said, pointing to a little cottage—

"That's whar *I* stay, ye ken; I maun gang awa' hame the noo." (That's where I stay, you know; I must go away home now.)

"What's about it, lad, don't stop the man; *ye* gang if ye wull," cried Hal.

"I wish the gentleman was oor teacher," said little Willie.

"Mither said I was to be sharp hame," muttered Fern, with a side glance at Grant.

"Stop till he's gien us what he said," added another.

"He's gien us a real nice story; I wish he'd tell us another. Will ye?" put in Hal. "There's naebody tells us lads anything like that; they think us too bad, ye ken. Yer sure it's for the like o' us?"

Mr. Grant could hardly speak in reply, for nearly all spoke at once; but he laid his hand on Hal's shoulder, and said—

"For *just* such as you, my lad; He died for the

bad ones to bring us to God ;” and pulling from his pocket a packet of attractive little books, put one in the hand of each.

These little books are much more thought of in Scotland than in England, and much more prized. All the boys, except Fern, received them eagerly. He took one, and skulked off. Three others moved off at once, promising to read them. Hal and Willie, and of course Grant, remained.

“Mother ’ll wonder ; I’ll have to go away,” said Willie, reluctantly. “I’ll have to take my piece before school goes in again.”

“And how far have you to go, my little fellow ?”

“Through the wood, and just a few steps on the other side.”

“Well, you must not keep mother waiting ; but will you come in a few minutes, on your way back from school—in to Grant’s cottage. I am going away, and I would like to say good-bye.”

“Yes, I will,” said the little boy, with a bright look. “You’ll be there ? Mother will think a heap of my book,” he added, as he walked off.

“And where are you going, Hal ?” asked Mr. Grant.

“Just anywhere. I’m not going to the school any more the day.”

“But you will be going home to dinner.”

“There’s no one in but Rough. Faither’s at the smiddy, and we’ll get the broth when he’s done, not afore. I mean to wait here for you. Maybe you’ll be comin’ out when you’ve had dinner.”

Mr. Grant smiled at the earnestness of the lad, who had struck up such a sudden friendship with

him. It reminded him of the confidence that may suddenly be established between a great rough stray dog, who has lost its master, and some kindly stranger who takes notice of it for a few minutes. The poor brute may have such a longing for a kind word, a warm shelter, and a faithful friend, that it will cling to you, if you begin by encouraging it, and at last you can hardly get rid of it, except by a kick or a rough word. For a moment Mr. Grant was puzzled what to reply. He would willingly have asked the lad to the cottage; but did not know whether it would be wise to bring him in contact with the children there, therefore he asked, "Why do you want to wait for me, Hal?"

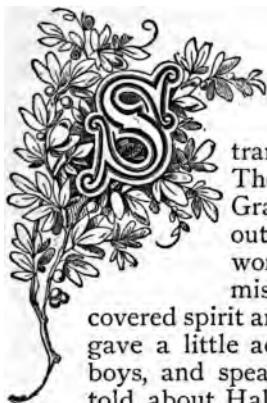
"'Cause I *do*," was the answer; "and maybe ye'll tell me more o' *thon* about the Good Master—fact is, I'm tired o' things, and it seems kind o' cheery. I'm aye in scrapes, and I'm told I'm for no good. *You* didn't say it—anyway I'll wait about here, you'll not be long?"

"No, but I must go now; I promised Grace, Grant's sister, to be in to dinner, and I'm afraid I shall be late. You sit on this bench for the present, by the side of the cottage, and I will see you again, and we'll have some more talk together."



CHAPTER XV.

THE NARROW PATH.



O Hal sat down outside, while Grant and his uncle went in. A savoury smell greeted them on their entrance, and two smiling faces. They were just in time: in fact, Gracie was then going to run out and look for them. Not a word was said about Grant's misbehaviour, and he soon recovered spirit and confidence; but their uncle gave a little account of coming across the boys, and speaking to them; and then he told about Hal being outside, and how he had seemed to take an interest in the word spoken.

"Was it Hal Gilgower?" asked Grace, of her brother.

"Yes, it's him," he replied; "the master is always caning him for runnin' away from school. His father lets him do as he likes."

"I know Hal, then" said Grace; "he's not such a very bad boy; he doesn't do mean, cruel things.

Mightn't he come and get a little bit of this nice chicken, uncle ; here's a leg he could have ; and if he wants to hear of Jesus, he would be a different boy, perhaps. I remember a lot of cruel, wicked boys on the meadow yonder, pulling honey bees to pieces to get the drop of honey to suck ; they often do it—catch them by dozens, as they fly about on the flowers ; and I begged some of them not, but they only laughed and mocked, and Hal stood by, and he didn't do it. He said he thought it ' awful cruel,' for such a little bite, too ; and I—I couldn't help crying a little. And he suddenly called the boys to go to the wood for something, and I know it was to get them off it, because Hal said to me, ' The bum bees will get a bit peace now.' ”

“ I know him by sight,” said Jeanie, “ and once I saw him carrying wee Tony home when he was lost. He had him on his shoulders, and Tony's face was all smeared with tears and dirt ; but he wasn't crying then, and looked quite happy, and Hal was real kind to him—but, folks say he's wild.

“ Ah, but,” pleaded Grace, “ remember he's got no—no mother,” and here her voice faltered, “ only a sister, who is away mostly, and his father lets him do as he likes, and his father drinks.”

“ I am quite willing, dear, if only he won't trouble you afterwards ; but where can he sit ? ”

“ Oh, he'd sit by the fireside, on Grant's little stool,” said Grace.

So her uncle rose to get him in, saying, “ Well, after all your evidence in his favour, I think he must come, and I believe myself there is a kind heart beneath a rough coat.

So, greatly to Hal's surprise, he was brought in. Certainly the savoury smell of the chickens had reached him and made his mouth water, and his eyes were near doing the same, when Mr. Grant said—

"Gracie seems to remember a kindness you once did her, Hal, and she wants you in to take a bit of dinner with us."

"*Me* do onything kind! She must ha' been mistook, but she's a real nice lassie, and if *you're* there I'll come."

And how he did enjoy his dinner! and they all enjoyed it the more because he entered into the little entertainment with so much pleasure.

When the dinner was cleared away, Grace came to her uncle and whispered something in his ear. "Do, please," she said aloud, "Jeanie would like it, and I believe Hal would. It is the last afternoon, and it would be so nice. Jeanie and Hal, I'm sure you'd be glad if uncle would talk to us and tell us a story out of the Bible," she went on, waxing courageous; "we'd all sit round the fire, as it is rather cold, and he'll tell you some more like he did this morning, Hal."

"It would be real fine," said Hal, looking towards Mr. Grant.

"Please do," asked Jeanie, modestly.

"Most willingly," he replied, smiling, "and I'm very glad you all desire to hear more of those things which alone can make us truly happy."

"I wonder if you can each say you are truly happy. What do you say, Hal?"

"I'm real happy jist now," he replied, with a twitch of his shoulders, settling himself down by the fire, "but I guess I'm not always. This is a

fine clean place ; but, oh my ! you should see our kitchen sometimes. Bella, she don't care, she leaves it onyway 'cept when father scolds her, and then she gives it a clean. There's me and Rough turns it upside down, but she might try a wee bit more."

"Who's Bella ?"

"My sister. There's only her and me left, and father ; but he goes to the 'Lion' most nights, and his company's not worth much, I can tell ye, when he gets hame. But I want to forget it all, we're so cosy here ; it's no use thinking on," he added, seeing Grace's grave sad face, "only folk do say I'm wild and bad, and I ken I often get in jolly scrapes, though I'd like to see what they'd do if they was me."

"I told you this morning, my boy, of One who can help you. He is great, He is kind and merciful, and He wants to bless you. If you are poor or unhappy, or without true friends, you are the very one He is willing to befriend."

"That's jist it," replied Hal, "I canna forget it. If I kened how to get Him to do it, but there ! I have got naebody to put me in the way. Do ye all ken aboot it ?" he asked, looking at the three young ones, "because when he's gone you might tell me. But you fight," he added, looking at Grant, "and," he said, "the Good Master's folks didn't fight." Grant hung his head, and did not answer, but Grace said timidly —

"We're just learning like you. Uncle told us about Jesus dying for our sins, and putting them all away, and it makes Jeanie and me happy, and we want to serve Him, and I'm sure Grant must want too, for Jesus is so good, and loves us so."

"Willie is comin', he'll be here directly," said Hal. "Let's wait on him, he's a nice wee chap."

"Yes, we must not forget Willie ; he lives but a little way off, he says."

"Only at the end of the wood, uncle."

"I'll see if he's comin'," cried Hal, springing up and opening the door. "The bairns are out o' school, and he'll be here in a minute," and, shutting the door, he ran to meet him, and brought him in triumphantly.

The little party gathered round Mr. Grant, and a most pleasing task lay before him, as with upturned faces the children waited for him to tell them the good news.

He began by giving them a description of two roads leading out of a large country ; he told them there were only these two roads for people to travel in, and that all must journey on in the one or the other. He drew a picture of the one road, which, to look upon, at first appeared smooth, pleasant, and enchanting ; the flowers were bright coloured, there were amusements offered to beguile the way, shouts of laughter might be heard, and all seemed gay and bright, but you could not get any who were on the road to tell you where it led to ; they said there "was time enough to think of that presently," and laughed it off ; others said they did not care, it was so pleasant at the beginning ; some a little further on looked careworn and perplexed, but they drowned their feelings with a poisonous cup. Watching them ever, and alluring them on, was the master they had chosen to serve, whose wages they must take, and with whom they must cast in their lot for the future.

Now some people were just ready to start on the journey, and were looking from one road to the other, to decide upon which road to travel. The broad attractive road was just before them, their feet were on the very commencement, while close at hand was another with a gate before it, and from time to time sweet voices cried "Come," and over the gate was written, "Whosoever will, let him come." The road was rather hidden from view, for the gate was straight and narrow, but when it opened to admit any from without, there was nothing glittering and dazzling to be seen, only a calm sweet light shone along the road, and it seemed to get brighter away in the distance, whilst on the *other* road, though very bright at first, the distance was hidden by mist and gloom, but very few in *that* road looked forward, for they were so beguiled by *their* master who kept putting first one thing and then another in their way. Those on the narrow road had a Master too—a guide,—One to whom each came to gain admittance to the path. None could travel that way without having to do with Him. "I am the way," was written on His very brow.

And His followers seemed to love Him dearly, and they had the opportunity for some way of speaking and calling to those on the other road; they warned them that ruin was at the end of it all, but many only laughed in return; a few listened, and applied to the One who alone could place them on the narrow path.

"Now, children, I can tell you the end of these paths," he said, and simply and earnestly Mr. Grant pointed out to them that the end of the broad road was swift and sudden destruction. The poor

beguiled one got further from the right and from the truth, finding the bright-coloured flowers poisonous, the amusements unsatisfying, until suddenly the road ended in a gulf of woe and misery, and the foolish traveller was lost for ever.

He spoke of the narrow path; it had difficulties oftentimes, and discouragement as far as the road was concerned, but then the Blessed Guide was ever near to cheer, to whisper words of comfort, and to point to the joy and glory coming, for at the end of the road was the palace of the King, and to this His followers were welcome! Such a burst of glory and glad music welcomed the "overcomer," that the troubles by the way, and the laughs and jeers of those going the downward path, seemed as nothing.

The little group to whom Mr. Grant spoke listened most attentively, not an eye was taken off him, and pussy's purring on the rug could be distinctly heard, along with the ticking of the little American clock. He spoke so simply, yet drew the picture so vividly, that it seemed to them literally a matter of life or death; now and then a deep drawn sigh from Hal, or Gracie, showed how much they entered into it. At this point, Mr. Grant halted a minute, and with one accord the little group gave vent to their feelings.

"What fools they war to keep in that broad path!" said Hal.

"Oh, why *didn't* they all go on Jesus' road?" exclaimed Gracie.

"What a beautiful end for the overcomers!" said Jeanie with sparkling eyes.

"Oh dear," sighed Grant.

"Are we all on *one* of thae roads?" asked little Willie.

"All," answered the uncle; "your feet are at this present moment on the one or the other."

"How quick could we get off that broad one?" asked Hal with some anxiety.

"Just as you can look to the One who died to save you from Satan's power. Jesus, the Blessed Saviour, stands waiting, Himself the door to that road. He has done all that is needed to save you from the destructive path; and one look in faith to Him, one earnest cry to Him, putting your trust in His work on the cross to save you, will plant your feet within that gate. All on that narrow path He calls His brethren and sisters,—children of His Father. All will share His glorious home.

"I don't see where the narro' road is," said little Willie.

"No more do I," said Hal; "if I did, I'd soon be on it; I'd never be so foolish as to keep by the other."

"The Lord said, 'Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' He meant, we must seek the way to everlasting happiness—*that* is, the narrow way. We are all hastening on to eternity, either with Christ as our Saviour, loving Him, serving Him; or hasting down to destruction, with Satan as our master, pleasing ourselves, and forgetting God and His Holy Word."

"What must we be doin' *first*?" asked Hal.

"Believe His Word," answered Mr. Grant.

"I guess I dinna ken much about it."

"I will read you a verse of it,—'God *so* loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth should not perish but have everlasting life.' " Three times he read it slowly, and dwelling on certain words.

"How simple it seems to me now," said Grace, with a bright happy look. "Hal, Jesus was punished instead of you and me sinners; God says He won't punish us if we believe it. Is it not beautiful? And He has gone up to heaven to help us along the path that leads there."

"You dinna mean it!" said Hal. "Not the like of me?"

"Those who were *lost*," said Mr. Grant, gently.

"Sinners!" said Jeanie.

"Well, He is *real* good to have taken the punishment instead of us."

"Look to Him, Hal,—look to Him all of you, and He will teach you and guide you in the right path."

A little longer they stayed by the fire talking, that well-to-be-remembered afternoon—again the seed was sown—and in some little hearts sank deep, and after a while sprang up; often the weeds sprang up too, and well nigh choked it, but the One who watered it helped the young ones to pull up the weeds one by one, and carefully tended the imperishable seed till it bloomed and bore fruit for Himself.

"Let me come up and help ye sometimes, I can do lots o' things, and you'll read me a bit out o' your fine little text-book—this is such a bonny kitchen—and I'm afeard I'll jist be as bad as afore

if there's naeboddy to help me along the narrow path," said Hal to Grace as he turned to go.

With a flushed face and a quick glance at her uncle for his consent, Grace answered as her warm pitying little heart prompted her,—“Yes, come when you like, in the day time after school, I want to keep on that path, and Grant, and you, and me will ask Jesus to teach us how to; little Tony Todd will be here, but you like him and are kind to him, I know.”

“All right, I'll be sure and come,” he added, casting a regretful glance round him at the cosy kitchen. Mr. Grant went with him down the road, giving him good advice, and asking him about his school and his home.

“If you come up to see Grace and Grant, you must promise me to try and never say a rough rude word before them, and never to bring a companion without leave, and never to enter without knocking and asking permission. Will you promise me this?”

“Say it again,” asked Hal. Mr. Grant did so, “Now, will you promise.”

“I will,” cried Hal stoutly, “and I wouldna tell you a lee.”

“I believe you, and now good-by, and remember the Lord's servants must never do anything they think would displease Him. If you fail, Hal, confess it out to Him and He will forgive.”



CHAPTER XVI.

TAKING CARE OF TONY.



ONY'S sister, Bella, brought him to Gracie on her way to the mill next morning, just half an hour after Mr. Grant had bade good-bye to his little nephew and niece, and this helped to comfort Grace a little and divert her thoughts, for she missed him sadly, and after he was gone she had thrown herself on her knees by the bedside, clasping tightly her little text-book in her hands, and sobbing as if her heart would break. He had kissed her so tenderly, and prayed the Lord to bless her so earnestly, that it was almost more than she could bear; it was not till after he was gone, and the door was closed, and his footsteps became fainter in the distance, that she felt how she had loved him, and how lonely all seemed without him. Then opening her little book, and reading the verse for the day, she found it was, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;" and,

with a fresh burst of glad tears, she cried, "If *you* will be with me always, Lord Jesus, I can be happy yet."

Mr. Grant had given her six envelopes, stamped and directed to himself, and Gracie promised to write every fortnight, and he promised to reply, and she was to get Mrs. MacLean to read the letters if she were not able. He also gave them half-a-crown each to put in their boxes and spend on something useful, whatever they wished, but they must consult their father.

That had been a very happy time for Grace during her uncle's visit. She was singularly open to impression and instruction of any kind, and the loving, earnest way he spoke to her had caused the truth to penetrate into her very heart. How many little children are open to impression! How many would gladly receive the truth if it were brought to them in a loving, earnest way! But how many hundreds, especially of the middle and upper classes, are passed over altogether, and never have it brought home to them that *they* are sinners needing a Saviour, who is *ready* to save them! And even in our Sunday schools, how few comparatively of the teachers understand the simple gospel, and are so at rest and peace themselves that they can bring it before their scholars!

Tony's solemn little face appealed to Gracie's heart directly, and she received him gladly. He had a head of thick curly hair slightly towards the red shade, but his complexion was so clear and his eyes so blue that he was a rather bonny-looking little boy. His eyes were very large, and he gazed about in a solemn way, though he could

shout and play when his spirit was up. Bella said she would call for him about a quarter to six on her way home, and then she went away. Grace thought the best way to make him feel at home was to amuse him for a little while, for he was very near crying when left by his sister; although he knew Grace by sight, yet sometimes two or three weeks had elapsed without seeing her; so she brought out her own little chair, which she had used as a tiny child, and set it beside the fire, and then she carried Puss to him, and talked to him about Mrs. Tabby till he began to smile. After that she hunted up one or two old picture-books, carefully laid by, which had amused Grant and her in their infancy, and told him funny little stories out of them, and presently he began to smile and, to her delight, ran about the kitchen after the cat. Gracie felt proud and happy then, to see her little charge making himself at home, and she began to wash up her dishes, talking to him meanwhile and watching him carefully that he came to no harm. He soon got up his courage to run out at the back-kitchen door and play a little in the yard, and Gracie showed him how to make dust-pies, which Grant had been so fond of in his early days.

Her father was working near by to-day, so she had to make a little broth for the dinner, as he was coming home; but she knew well enough how to do this, and Tony ran with her to the little garden and pulled up the vegetables, and then she minced them up and boiled them with a little bit of beef her father had brought home the night before. She was very careful to attend to her mother's directions in bygone days, and

not let it boil too hard, and then she added a teacupful of pearl barley and some dried green peas. Perhaps English people might think it rather a mixture with the chopped leeks and cabbage and carrot and parsley, but it was very nourishing and went a long way, and soon a very savoury smell arose and pervaded the kitchen.

Tony had brought with him a little tin mug, and a parcel containing a slice or two of bread scraped with butter, and a tiny bit of bacon between two pieces of bread. Bella asked Gracie to give him a ha'porth of milk to drink in the day, and she would settle for it, and so little Tony was provided for.

"At's borth in there," said Tony, pointing to the pot. "Tony 'ikes borth; 'at's for Tony."

"Tony 'll get a taste soon," said Grace, wondering how she should manage about it. "Father said I wasn't to get in the way of feeding him with our food, as it wouldn't answer, and they'd expect it, but a drop of broth! no one would miss it, and he smells it too, it would be hard to say no. What shall I do about it? I must mind father. I've no one to ask—no one? How soon I forgot! Uncle said I might ask the Lord Jesus everything. I'll just ask Him about this. He loves little children, and I'm sure he wouldn't like little Tony to go without any broth while we sup it, and there's enough and to spare. He fed five thousand people when *they* was hungry."

So Gracie cast her little care upon the Lord, and like a simple child did not take it up again. As Tony ran about, saying—"Gracie, give Tony nicey borth soon;" Grace said, quietly, "Gracie thinks so, Tony."

When her father came in to dinner he seemed pleased to see Tony there—after his fashion; and Grant coming in from school, all sat up round the table. Tony's bread and butter was placed on a little plate before him by Grace, and then the smoking broth was ladled out by the father. Tony looked at his pieces, and made rather a jib, but Gracie wisely said nothing; had she begged for broth for Tony, she would likely have been met by grumbling and, perhaps, a refusal. Her own plateful was given her, Tony eyeing it wistfully, but too much afraid of the stranger to speak. "Is that the bairn's dinner?" he asked, pointing to the bread.

"Yes, father, that's what his mother sent for him. Eat it, Tony dear," she said. But Tony rubbed one fist into his eye and drew down his mouth. "Tony 'ike nicey borth," he murmured. How Grace longed to pour a little of hers over his "pieces," but she knew from experience this wouldn't do, and her thoughts turned back to the story she had heard of Jesus feeding the multitude with loaves and *fishes*. "It's a pity his mother couldn't send him a drop of broth, that bread looks dry," said Campbell; taking a spoonful of broth, which Tony watched right into his mouth. "Me 'ike borth," said Tony, gathering courage. The little fellow had appealed to *him*; and under the cheering influence of the hot meal he felt a thrill of benevolence. "Do ye, now? Well, he might get a taste the first day, Gracie; it won't do for always or to do it again, but if you get a bowl we'll give the wee lad a drap." How eagerly Gracie brought it, saying to herself, "I'm so glad I've Jesus to go to, He can do things so much

better and easier than I." "I 'ike your borth, it's fine," said Tony, smacking his lips, and Campbell laughed. "That's for a start, but you must eat your own dinner to-morrow mind," he said. "Do ye hear, Grace?"

"Yes, father; and Mrs. Todd is to send a ha'penny a day for milk for him. When we have broth couldn't he get it instead, she'd be just as pleased?"

"Jist so, the broth 'ud be as good for the wee laddie, and he'd be more content."



CHAPTER XVII.

A VISIT AND AN ADVENTURE.



T was a great pleasure to little Grace that afternoon, when the work was done, to tidy Tony up, and take him a short walk outside; she called with him upon Mrs. M'Pherson, the old woman next door, and found her a little better from a recent attack of rheumatism, and anxious to get out of bed, but Nanny wouldn't help her—the fact was she didn't want to be troubled with getting her old grandmother up; “she'd want her stick to walk with,” she said, “and her clothes brought to her and fastened, and her shawl over her shoulders, and so many things!”

“I'm wearied of the bed,” groaned the old woman; “but Nanny's too busy to see to me. I s'pose I'm in the way; dear, dear, what a thing it is to be old!”

“If Nanny's busy, I could help you for a few

minutes," said Grace, cheerfully "while Tony sits down by the fireside."

"Oh, Granny's always worrying," cried Nanny, in a loud voice; "one might be always running after her."

"May I get her things for her, and help her up?" asked Gracie.

"She's got the most o' them on, but there's her dress to fetch, and to comb her hair, and give her her stick and shawl, and set the chair at the fire-side."

"*That's* not much; I guess, I can do it all," said Grace, bringing one thing after another to the old body; "it will be such a change for you to be up. See, I'll hook your dress," she added; as the trembling hand tried in vain to manage it. "And when you are finished, what would you like to get doing?"

"Aye, there's naething for me to do. I'd be real glad of a little bit of knitting; I could make mesel' a pair o' cuffs to keep my hands warm, but there's nobody to trouble about seeing to it." Grace looked at Nanny. But Nanny said, "How could I keep the house together if I was after everything Grannie wanted; she thinks I have nothing to do but see after her."

"Never mind," answered Gracie, "*I* have plenty of time, and I can set them on for her, if you give me the needles. Have you any?"

"You'll find some in that drawer, if you look," cried Nanny, pointing to an old bureau.

After a search of some minutes, Gracie found them. "What shall I do for wool?" she asked.

"I have a few pence of me ain," answered the old woman, fumbling for her little worn old-

fashioned purse; "and I'll tak it verra kind of ye to get me half a cut of wool, wee lassie."

"I'll do it; I'm to go to the village the first thing in the morning, and I'll buy it then. Will you have grey, or black and white?"

"Black and white would be a bit change, and not need so much washing."

Then I'll be sure to get it, and cast it on for you," added Grace. "Tony, keep still a minute, while Grace shows her pretty book;" and she took out her little text-book, and displayed her treasure

"See, Granny, uncle gave me this."

"What's it about?" asked the old lady, while Nanny came to look, a little ashamed of herself for her neglect of her grandmother.

"It's all about the Bible; beautiful texts, you know, for every day; if you like, I'll come in and tell you each day what the text is."

"Ay, do; it's very dull in here," murmured the old woman.

"What do you know about texts?" said Nanny to Grace; "that sort of business is for the ministers of the kirk."

"Oh, Nanny, how can you! See my text for to-day. 'Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' It means Jesus is always with those who love Him," said Grace, with a great effort, for she saw Nanny was ready to laugh, "and sinners need Jesus—I do."

"Ay, you're a good lassie," said Granny.

"No, indeed; but Granny, I've found how good Jesus is since I was here." Tony began pulling Grace to the door and trying to get out, so she was obliged to say good-bye, and promised to come in the morning with the wool.

"Where shall we go, Tony?" asked his little keeper, when they were outside.

"Tony go and pick 'pitty flowers," said the child.

"Very well, and take them home to mother. I have the key of the door safe round my neck; we will sit in this meadow."

Tony ran about getting 'booful' dandelions and buttercups and daisies, and Gracie took out her stockings to knit. She was making Grant a pair for his birthday; her mother had been alive when she began them, and her thoughts as she sat there went back to many little scenes of the past. She remembered too what her uncle had said of the danger of her being less careful about Grant when there was Tony to take care of, and she was hoping she would be kept watchful and careful over him, when she heard footsteps as of some one running hurriedly down the road. Tony too noticed the heavy tramp, and ran to a little gap in the hedge to look out. In a minute she heard some one say, "Hallo, Tony, is that you? is any one else there?"

"Grace he-er," answered Tony.

"Oh, is it you?" cried Grace, recognising Hal; "come in and sit down."

"May I?" cried he.

"Yes, of course; where's Grant?"

"He'll be here in a little while; I've come pretty quick."

"Why did you run so fast?"

"Jis' to get awa from the lads; I'm afraid, somehow, it's not much use my trying to keep along that narrow road; you see I'm all alone, and all the lads 'll be against me."

"Not Grant?"

"Well, he goes wi' them, and they are fixin' to be up to a piece of mischief to-morrow instead of the afternoon school, only you musn't tell—promise!"

"Yes, I'll promise; but Grant won't go!"

"He wants to; they're talking him over, jist three o' them, and I slipped away and ran as hard as I could along here, saying over the gentleman's little prayer, 'Teach me thy way, O Lord;' if I hadna done it, I should a went along wi' them."

"Oh, I'm glad you didn't. Don't give up, Hal, remember the guide! How dreadful it would be to go down the broad way; and it would seem so mean to listen to Satan and turn away from Jesus who died for us."

"So it would," cried Hal, "and I won't, I'll just go straight a-head; only I'm such a bad one, you don't know half the bad things I've done."

Grace drew out her little text-book, and looking about, found the verse, "Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "He died and put away sin, Hal. Do believe it, and it will make you so happy. Uncle said all our doings couldn't make us good, but the blood of Jesus can."

"It must be wonderful powerful!"

"So it is," said Gracie, simply; "and I believe He'll always help us if we ask Him. He'll help us to believe in Him."

"I'll ask Him that!" exclaimed Hal. "What's the verse for my birthday? It's on the second of January."

"Whosoever believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life," read Gracie.

They were both very still after this ; Hal pulled his cap over his eyes, and lay flat on the grass, with his face downwards, pulling the grasses, and Gracie after a few minutes ran for Tony, who had wandered a short distance away.

After a few minutes Grant came running quickly along the road, followed by Willie Brown ; by the time he reached the gap in the hedge he was nearly breathless.

"Hallo!" cried Hal.

"Oh, Hal!" cried Grant, "what do you think? There's a mad dog in the village—a stray one," he panted, "and it has bit a man, and he'll go mad they say, and it's running about, and they can't catch it; I came to get home, 'cause its dreadful, all foam at its mouth! Men are after it now, 'cause it bit a goat and a sheep too! There, listen! that's a gun; it's coming this way, and they are shooting after it."

Hal had sprung to his feet, and out into the road. True enough, near the top of the hill, but descending, was a dog coming along at a quick pace.

"They've missed it," cried Grant, preparing to run to the cottage, which was about a hundred yards off. "Run, Willie."

"There's Tony and Grace in the meadow, it may turn in there!" shouted Hal, making towards them as quick as possible. The two were only some thirty yards distant, and already coming at a leisurely pace towards the boys. Little Tony had his hands full of flowers for his "muller," as he called her, and Gracie was making daisies into a chain, both perfectly unaware of danger near at hand. There had been a case of hydrophobia

in the village the summer before, and the dreadful sufferings of the poor woman who was bitten had made a great impression on the people living near.

While Hal ran quickly towards Tony and Grace, Grant halted and called loudly to Grace to come quick, then, seeing that she understood, and was running towards home, he made off as quick as his legs would carry him. "I'll get in and open the door for them," he thought, quite forgetting that Grace had the key round her neck.

As soon as Hal reached them he caught up Tony in his arms, and cried to Grace to run after him as fast as she could "for there was a fierce dog coming." He did not like to say "mad," he thought it might frighten her too much. Then he made for the gate with all speed.

"Where is it," cried Grace in terror.

"On the road, it may turn in here; be quick."

With shaking knees and terrified looks, Grace followed as fast as possible, and now the shouts of the men were plainly audible as they pursued the poor mad creature. In that few moments as they ran, the prayer went up from one of the children, "Lord help us!" Hal feared he could not reach the gate much before the dog, yet he dared not stay in the meadow as the gate was open, and should it turn in they would stand a poor chance if it attacked them. Just as they reached the gate, it ran into the meadow through the gap in the hedge, with its tongue hanging out, and its mouth foaming, and its eyes starting. Tony caught sight of it and gave a scream which attracted the animal's attention, and it followed in their direction.

There was only a moment or two, but Hal made

the best of them ; he set Tony in the road, and ran and seized the heavy wooden gate, and pulled it close. By this time the men were near at hand, and Hal did not wait to see whether the dog was kept at bay by the closed gate, but he lifted Tony in his arms and pulled Grace towards the cottage. With trembling hands Grace brought out the key, and they entered the kitchen just as two reports of a gun went off.

A minute after Grant and Willie entered; they had found the door locked and had taken refuge round at the back. The children's faces were white with the fright they had sustained, but perhaps Grace suffered the most, she sat down on the nearest chair trembling, and ashy pale, and for some minutes could neither speak nor move. "Give her a drop o' water," said Hal, and Grant gave it to her, patting her shoulder, and saying, "Poor Grace, it was a dreadful beast!"

"I should think it's been shot," said Hal.

"Don't go and see," cried Gracie, and then she burst into tears. This gave her relief, and soon after she felt better, and was able to soothe poor Tony, who was distressed at seeing her cry, and was talking about "the bad doggie" who "fited Gace."

"What *should* we have done if you hadn't been there," said Grace, "Oh, Hal, I *am* so glad you came and carried Tony. The Lord *did* help us, I asked Him. Oh, wouldn't it have been dreadful if any of us had been bitten and gone mad!" And to herself Grace said, "But *He* is with us always, and He took care of us and sent Hal."

"I'm glad I didn't stay along o' the lads," said Hal, "I should never have forgave myself."

"The narrow road is the best, isn't it?" said Grace, simply.

"It is, and I mean to stick to it, if He'll help me."

"He is 'the way,'" added Grace.

"We can only get inside, and make a fair start, by believing Jesus died for us. Your uncle said that the last thing to me, and bid me not to forget."

Grant fidgetted while they spoke, and turned very red; but little Willie listened with both his ears, and said to Grace, "I've read them little books to mother, and she likes them—they the gentleman gave us."

At last, Hal could not restrain his impatience, and went to see what had become of the dog, promising to be very careful.

He returned in about five minutes, saying the second shot they heard had killed the poor animal, and the men were going to bury it, as it was dangerous to lie about, and they wanted a spade, and would be glad to know if there were such a thing belonging to the cottage; and, if so, would the children lend it.

Grant ran and got it, and in a few minutes the poor creature was buried deep in the earth.



CHAPTER XIX.

GRACE MAKES A LITTLE MISTAKE.



OF course, when their father reached home he heard all the story, and was really so glad that the children were safe, that he was quite kind and pleasant through the greater part of the evening, both to Grant and Grace.

"You must go to the village in the morning, as I am working the other way," he said to Grace. "Go and buy the oatmeal and a quarter-stone of flour and sugar and tea. Is there anything else we want?"

"We have no salt and no eggs; if you're wanting any to your dinner to-morrow, I'd better get some. We have bacon, and there's some of the herring left. And, father, *may* I get a little wool to begin some stockings, I've nearly finished what I'm doing?"

"Who are they for?"

"The ones I'm doing are a secret," she said, lowering her voice; "but they are needed, father ;

and the ones I want to begin are a secret too; only I have to ask you about the wool. I wish I hadn't, but I want to know if I may use some of the money uncle gave me for it. I promised I'd ask you first. I shall only want half of it."

Her father gladly gave consent, and told her to get two or three eggs with the other things; so Gracie determined to take Tony to shop with her in the morning, as soon as Grant was off to school, and she had put the house in order.

Grant usually started about nine o'clock for school, and Tony had not long arrived, when Gracie tried to persuade him to get ready. Their mother had been very particular that they should go clean and neat to school, and since Gracie had taken it upon herself to see after her brother, she too was anxious that his face and hands should be well washed and his hair neatly brushed. This morning somehow, Grant was not in a very happy frame of mind, perhaps he was not very satisfied with himself for what he had promised to engage in that day; anyhow, he was certainly rather snappish when spoken to. Grace saw this, and knew he would be difficult to manage. At the same time, she *knew* there was only one way in which she could be successful in getting him round to what she wanted, but she did not stop to think about it; she did not stop a minute and look up, saying—"Lord help me"—as she had begun to do in little difficulties. She was too anxious to get him away, and be off to the village, to wait and think.

"Grant," she said, "come and wash yourself for school; it's time you were ready."

"I'm clean enough," replied Grant.

"No, your hands are not; they are quite dirty."

"They're clean enough," he answered, shortly.

"Oh, Grant, how *can* you say so; look at them!"

"They're clean enough," repeated he.

"Ay, *not* c'ean enough," said Tony; who was standing by.

"They are," said Grant.

"Grant, you must wash them at once," urged his sister. He did not turn upon her and refuse, he was very seldom rude to Grace, but he was in a perverse mood this morning, and not easily moved.

Even then, Grace knew in her heart a different way of dealing with him would have been better. Yet something kept her back from trying it, and little Tony had something to do with it. Had she been quite alone with Grant, and dependent on him for any kindness or amusement—as she had often been—she would have striven hard to win him round, but then there was Tony, and without exactly allowing it, she was conscious she had some one to fall back upon, who was *dependent* upon her, and upon whom she could lavish attention and care in Grant's absence.

Oh how easily our hearts may be led aside if we are not watching hourly, and how anxious our enemy is to gain even a slight advantage over us, especially when we start on the narrow path! In reply to Grace's last remark, Grant answered while strapping his books:

"Don't worry so!"

"But you can't go to school so. 'I must brush your hair and have you wash'"—and she began to brush pretty vigorously at his head. He twisted it from side to side, and told her "it would do."

"No, it will not, Grant," she said, trying again. "You are very troublesome; I'll have to tell father."

"That would be the first time," he said, the colour coming into his face. "I thought ye didn't much care for me getting beatings."

Grace flinched. *She* tell, when she had so often tried to beg him off?

"Well, wash then," she said, trying to keep down her feelings.

"My han's are clean enough," replied Grant rather angrily, finishing up his books. "Where's my cap?"

"I can't give it to you till you've washed. Your hands are very dirty."

"Ay, is *verry* dirty," stamped Tony.

"Don't you talk to me," cried Grant, giving Tony a slight push on one side as he went for his cap. It was but a slight push, but Tony was unprepared for it, and, a little stool being behind him, he fell backward over it, and of course cried loudly. Grace sprung forward to pick him up, and dropped Grant's cap, which he laid hands on; and seeing Tony was not much hurt, began to walk off feeling rather ashamed.

"Oh, Grant! I'm afraid you're growing a real bad boy. How cruel to knock wee Tony down!" cried Grace, in her excitement.

"I didn't knock him down, and if I'm growing a 'real bad boy,' I expect I'll have to keep so. I think *you* are growing cross, Grace," and Grant walked off.

Grace settled Tony to his toys, and then went to the door to look after Grant. She longed to call him back and speak to him again. Her tears were

falling fast now, and the vexed feeling was quickly passing away. A little voice tried to make itself heard, while an uneasy sensation at her heart was making itself felt. The little voice said, "I thought you promised to be kind to Grant, and to take care of him. You were not very kind this morning."

"I know I wasn't," sobbed Grace.

"If you had brought him the basin of water, as you often do, and coaxed him, or talked amusingly to him, or reminded him his mother liked him to wash, perhaps he would have done."

"I think he would : I wish I had," murmured Gracie to herself.

"You told him you'd tell his father ; that will never help you much," went on the little voice.

"I know it won't. Oh ! if I'd only not said it ; he'll *never* forget."

"He thought you didn't love him when you said he was growing a 'bad boy.'"

"Oh ! I *do* love him ; though he was cross, he's a very nice boy, and a better brother than most," she sobbed, the tears running down her cheeks.

"I wonder if he is going with the bad boys to-day on that piece of mischief," suggested the voice.

Grace started, "Perhaps that was why he was unhappy and cross. Oh, Grant, come back !" but he was out of sight now.

"You didn't ask help this morning. I think you were too anxious to get to the shops to consider."

"That's the worst of all !" cried the little girl, and, throwing herself beside her bed, she poured her trouble into the Ear that never slumbers or sleeps. She confessed her fault, and humbly asked help to be more patient with her brother for the future. "Uncle said he was afraid I might not be



so careful over Grant, if I had Tony. I see it now. The Lord Jesus will be so grieved! And Grant won't believe I'm trying to please Him!" and fresh tears came.

She rose up quiet and subdued and very humble, to turn to her little text-book, for she had not yet looked at the text for the day. Tony had been watching her anxiously the last few minutes, and began patting her knee, saying—"Naughty Gant make Gacie cry. Gant a 'bad boy!' Tony good boy; he'll 'osh his hands."

"No, Tony, Grant isn't bad; Gracie didn't mean it; Grant's mother did not like him to be called 'bad.'"

"Tony's muller not like him called 'bad,' not like him get burned. Where's Gant's muller gone?"

"She's up in heaven where Jesus lives."

"Does she love Gant?"

"Yes, and she wants him to be a good boy and love Jesus, and go up to heaven some day."

"At's the nicey heaven," said Tony, pointing to the blue sky.

"Yes, and Jesus is there, and I want to go some day. Tony, will you go too?"

"No, Tony can't f'y; him's got no 'ittle wings. If Tony was a birdie, him could."

"Jesus takes little children there. He carries them up," said Grace.

"Tony sit and look if Jesus comes; praps Him 'ill come now and take Tony up," he said, seating himself on the doorstep and contemplating the tops of the trees.

Grace felt rather a difficulty in making Tony understand, so she thought she had better say nothing more than "Jesus is coming some day,

Tony ; we must try and please Him ; we wouldn't like Him to find us naughty."

"No-o, no, 'at would be shockin'," said Tony, shaking his head.

"Now, we'll go to the village, and Tony shall carry the basket and help me back with the things. We'll buy wool for stockings, and wool for cuffs, for a poor old lady whose hands are cold."

"Tony's not a old lady, but Tony's hands are cold, and *he'd* like nice cuffs."

"Would you?" cried Grace, delightedly ; "then I'll knit you a dear little pair for the winter."



CHAPTER XIX.

GRANT IS MISSING.



IN a little while the two children were on their way to the village — Tony happy and proud with the big basket. Much to his joy he met his mother, who had run out on a little errand for the lady she was working for, and she was delighted to see him looking so well and happy. Tony had no desire to leave Grace, however, but kept tight hold of her hand and pressed forward to the shops. They were successful in their purchases, having obtained the shade of wool Grace wanted, and turned homeward. On their way back they saw Grant and some companions run out of school, and, instead of turning towards home, run quickly in an opposite direction. As they ran they looked back to see if they were noticed, and Grant saw Grace and Tony. For a moment he halted, but being called by one of the boys, they all disappeared round a corner. At that moment Hal

came from the schoolhouse door, and ran towards her. "Grant has gone," he said ; "didn't he pass you ?"

"No," answered Grace, fearful lest Grant should be after mischief, and unwilling to tell if it were the case.

"That's odd, he was with twa other lads. I hope they are not going to play truant. I should, if it hadn't a been for you. You know what, but I feel I can't, as if it would be awful wicked. In a way it would be jolly ; you see there's a fair at Killin, and I heard some o' them say they'd like to go, and some o' them had leave, and had got some coppers to spend, but I know there's a deal bad at these fairs, drinkin' and swearin'. I met Jeanie Mac-Lean, and she stopped and spoke to me this morning. She had heard the folk up above talking of going, and she said she hoped I wouldn't, so I thought if you wasna against it, I'd come up in the afternoon, and we'd all have fun in the wood. But if Grant's gone—"

"Oh ! I hope not," said Grace, earnestly ; "father *would* be angry, but he's so easy led, and I was cross this morning, and I forgot to ask him to come home. If I'd only done right, and been thinking, I might have got him to listen."

"Has he any money with him ?"

"No, not a penny—unless—Uncle gave him two and sixpence, and he *did* ask me to let him look at it last night. Oh ! I hope he put it back. I never looked to see. If he has got it, what will I do ? He'll spend it on bad things, perhaps."

"Shall I run and look up the Killin road ?" asked Hal. "I might see some of them and get

them back, though they'd likely only 'call me over' for disturbing them."

"Run and look there," said Grace, pointing to the corner. "He did go that way with the boys."

"All right," and off Hal ran.

Grace waited ten minutes, and then Hal returned, out of breath, saying, "They were nowhere to be seen; the road ran straight after a short distance, but they were not on it."

"Perhaps they have gone by the fields!"

"Perhaps Grant has not gone at all; you had better go home; he may be all right, and I'll carry your basket for you." So taking Tony's hand, they went home, and Hal promised to come up again after school.

"If you have any wood to chop, I'll do it," he said.

"Thank you, there is a whole lot, and father is most too tired when he comes in."

No Grant came in for a "piece" at the dinner hour, and Gracie's fears were confirmed. She was very unhappy. She dreaded more than anything that her father should know and flog Grant, as he would be sure to if he found out, and she earnestly hoped that he would return before six.

She busied about as much as possible, and tried not to think too much about her trouble.

She "cast on" the cuffs for Mrs M'Pherson, much to the old lady's delight, and took in her Bible and text-book to read a few verses as she promised. "This is my verse to-day," said Grace, "Jesus said 'I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.' Isn't it good that we have Him to go to, and He will give us all we need. Uncle

said hunger and thirst did not mean just for bread and water of course, but for heavenly things. If we come to Jesus He will satisfy us—give us everlasting life—so we wouldn't be longing to get things in this world."

"'Never hunger or thirst,' there's a nice meaning in it I've no doubt," said the old woman; "and He is the bread, did you say?"

"Yes, and we must 'feed on Him,' it says here at the foot of the text. I expect it means trust Him and think of Him and love Him."

"I wish I knew more of that kind o' thing; but, lassie, I think I'm too old, ye ken. My thoughts are always twisting about here and there, and I get so onsettled."

"I don't think it matters: Jesus would help you. Uncle gave me a dear little book, and in it it says if a poor person who feels a great sinner would just look up and say 'Jesus'—nothing but 'Jesus'—that it brings such a rest. I can't tell right, but I know it makes me happy. It seems to remind me that He lived here and died for me, and is up in heaven caring about us. Did you ever say 'Jesus?'" asked Gracie.

"I don't know as I ever did, but its easy enough. Since you onsettled me so the other day about being good, I have quite a dread on my mind, and I don't feel so ready for my 'long rest,'" said the old woman, shifting on her chair. "Do you learn these things at the kirk? There's naeboddy talks like it here."

"I learn them in the Bible and the little text-book, now uncle is gone, but they don't onsettle me, Mrs. M'Pherson. It seems to me like a little baby getting into its mother's arms, when any-

body who is unhappy comes to Jesus. It's such a rest."

"Ay, that's the thing I want," said the old lady.

"Well, will I read you about the poor woman who was ill, and went to ever so many doctors; and then heard all about Jesus, and went to Him, and He cured her and sent her away in peace?"

The little girl found the place, and read to the old woman, who listened very attentively, and ended up by saying, "It seems like me, don't it? I'll not forget to say His name."

It was past five when Bella came in for Tony. She was early for him this evening, and he did not want to go; for Gracie made him so happy, and took such care of him, that he was well satisfied with his new quarters. He began to struggle with his sister, and ended up by crying and slapping. Bella got angry and a little jealous, and made matters worse by slapping him back. Tony roared.

"Oh! don't, please," cried Grace in distress. "Please, Bella, stop! He never does so with me. Tony, be a good boy, and I'll tell you what we'll do to-morrow." Tony freed himself from Bella, and ran to Grace, hiding his head in her lap.

"Tony, 'top here; not go with naughty Bella. Gracie never slaps Tony. Let him 'top a wee while," he cried, entreatingly.

It was some minutes before the little fellow could be pacified, but at last he was brought to subjection by Grace promising to walk a little way with him, and show him a bird's nest on the morrow if he were good. His sorrow was soon forgotten, and in a few minutes he was chatting merrily about the bird's nest and the eggs; but

Grace went along with a heavy heart. Grant had not appeared, and even Hal had not come as he promised, but, before she turned back, she saw him running down the hill towards her, and she waited for him.

"You'll wonder why I didn't turn up, and be afeard I was off too?" he asked.

"I did wonder, but I didn't think you'd go after you promised not, Hal. Have you heard of Grant?"

"Never a word, 'cept three boys beside him weren't at school, and I ran along to Bob M'Callum's to ask if they knew anything about Grant, and they said no, but Bob had leave to go."

"Bob M'Callum's a bad boy, isn't he?" asked Grace.

"As bad as there is, but Grant doesn't often go with him."

"What can I do?" said Grace.

"Nothin'," replied Hal; "he'll come home before long."

"I can do one thing," said Grace: "tell Jesus about it. He loves Grant better than me. He can take care of him, and make him sorry."

"Is he going on the broad road, do you think?" asked Hal.

"I hope not, but most people at these fairs are, I'm afraid—aren't you? I think they must see the dazzling lights and hear the merry sounds Uncle spoke of in the broad road, but, after it's over, how miserable people seem—their money is all gone, they have drunk themselves ill, and they won't work."

"Ay, I went last year, but you don't know half the bad things they do, and every one is jolly cross

the next day and lots of days after it's over. Father is going to-night; he'll not be home for two or three days. I feel something dragging me to go as well, and I'm not so good but what I'd like some of the things, but the swearin' and drinkin' I never did care about."

"Don't go, Hal. It's just Satan trying to tempt you, and it's Jesus holds you back."

"Oh, I don't mean to, unless to find Grant, but I think that's no use, and I believe you will have him in directly. I'll come and chop that wood for awhile; it will be company for you." So he returned with the little girl, who was really very unhappy about her brother, and while she got the tea ready, he chopped the wood. "What's the verse for to-morrow in that little book?" shouted Hal. Grace took it out of her pocket, and, running to the back door, read, "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

"What's faith?" asked Hal; "I've a kind of notion, but p'raps I'm wrong."

"To believe in God and God's Son," said Grace. "I learned two lines in a little book which says faith is

'Believing just exactly what
Our Heavenly Father says.'

And by believing—then, the verse says we can 'overcome the world.' I suppose it is all the troubles and difficult times—I think there are a great many troubles, but I do believe God will help us out of them."

"How well you chop, Hal?"

"Do I?" said he, bringing the chopper steadily down, and cracking up a great piece. "I reckon your father 'll be glad to find it done."

"Yes," said Grace, "I'll go and see if Grant's coming."

"Who are you talking with?" asked a voice behind her, and turning, she saw her father. "Oh father! it's Hal; he offered to come and chop some wood for us; his father's away, and he is lonesome, and you'll be glad to have it done—you're tired."

"He'll be wantin' pay for it, and I can't afford that."

"Not a penny," returned Hal, stoutly; "I like to come. I want to keep off from the lads, they're always in mischief; and Grace here has got a little book as helps us to do right, and she tells me a mighty deal that's in it."

"Wasting your time! eh, Grace," said her father, suspiciously glancing round, but everything was in order—he could find no fault.

"No, father; but Hal wants to do right, and I don't like to turn him away. It's my little text-book we read, and I'd like to read you the verse for to-day while you're at tea—may I?" she asked, timidly.

Her father made no answer, but began to pull off his boots. Grace stooped to help him. She almost wished he were going out that night because of Grant.

"Noo, noo," he said, putting her to one side; "it isn't work for you, it's Grant's business. Where is he?"

"He is not in yet, father," she answered, nervously.

"Where is he?"

"I don't know, father."

"What's wrong, then?" he asked, seeing her pale face.

"Nothing that I *know* of, only he isn't home; but perhaps he will be in a few minutes," and she hurried away to avoid any more questions.

"Shall we ask Hal to have a cup of tea, father? he's chopped nearly all the wood, and he says he means to finish it."

"Yes, if he's honest and up to no tricks, but I canna understand a lad working when he needna."

"Oh! Hal is honest enough, he is trying to do right, but his home has no comfort in it, and he likes to be here," answered Grace.

"Well, tell him to sit down to a piece."

So Hal came in and sat down, and, as he could talk pretty readily, he told John Campbell a little village news, and Campbell became quite interested and took rather a fancy to the boy.

"Now, I'm going to finish the wood," said Hal, when he had his tea, and he returned to the yard again.

Grace suddenly thought she would look and see if Grant's half-crown was safe in the box; so, opening the little box carefully where they kept the money, what was her dismay to find it missing. Her fears were now confirmed. He must have taken the money to spend at the fair. With shaking hands she closed the drawer, determining to say nothing about it at present.

"That's a smart boy," said Grace's father; "but where is Grant? I'll be bound he is up to mischief; now, no nonsense, Grace; you know what he is up to. Tell at once! Has he been at school the day?"

"He went in the morning," answered Grace, tearfully.

"He's not off to the fair?" cried her father, suddenly. "He *knows* he shouldn't," and banging his hand on the table, he added—"If he *has* been without leave, he'll pay for it this time."

At this moment Hal stepped in from the back; he had listened to every word. He saw Grace's frightened face and John Campbell's excited, angry one.

"He may not have gone," put in Hal; "I'm inclined to think these bad boys have been enticin' him. Wait, master, he may have gone a ramble in the wood, and be in directly; and will you, Grace, show me where to put this wood?"

Grace followed him gladly, thankful to get away. Hal took some time to pile it up; then, as it was growing dusk, and no Grant had appeared, he said—"I'm going down to the village to look for him, but I'll come back, and I shall stay here and sleep in this shed if all ain't right. Put an old rug in, and I'll bring something back to throw over me. I shall do well enough. If I bring him back, I'll stand by him."

"Oh! you *are* a good Hal," was all Grace could say; "God has sent you to help me!"

"Do you really *mean* that?" asked Hal; "it would be awful nice to think."

"I'm *sure*," said Grace, and Hal darted off. Eight o'clock struck! Campbell grew uneasy, and continued to vow vengeance against Grant. He was sure, now, he had gone to the fair, and, drawing out of Gracie his absence from afternoon school, he did not spare his threatenings as to how he would flog him when he returned. But he was not to see Grant that night. The hour passed, and he did not come. At half-past nine Hal re-

turned to ask if he had come home, as he had seen nothing of him.

Most of the respectable folks had returned from the fair, and Hal now wished he had gone over in the afternoon to look for him. Grace was miserable. Her father grew uneasy ; he would have been sorry if anything had happened to Grant, but he was angry with him for defying his word, and his temper was much roused. He put on his boots, and went out to look about, but it was a wet night, and he returned at ten without any success.

"They've got into some place at Killin," he said, "and won't be home till morning. I shan't stay up for him : I have to be off to work at six. You go to bed upstairs, Grace. I'll sleep here ; if he comes in I shall hear him, and he will catch such a thrashin' as he never had !" Poor Grace went off with a heavy heart, and Hal said "Good-night," and retired to the shed, unknown to Campbell. Neither slept much that night. Morning dawned, and all arose—the father saying he would come back at ten and see if Grant was in. After he was gone, Hal came round to the front.

"I'll run right off to Killin and see if I can find him. He must come home, though I wouldn't be in his shoes."

"Do," said Grace ; "here's a cup of hot tea first, it's raining still. Oh ! what's become of Grant ? My boy ! What *would* mother have done ? If you can't get him to come easily, tell him mother wants him home. I'm sure she does, and we'll try hard and get him off a beating. But I'm afraid of father this time, for Grant has been very naughty."

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRUANT FOUND.



IVE hours and a half passed. It was half-past eleven. Hal had come back from Killin, saying he could see or hear nothing of Grant, except that the other boys were home and had missed him the evening before, and supposed he had returned alone. Then Hal was obliged to run off to school, much against his will, but a text from the little book helped him to make up his mind to do right : "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

"I'll come back after school, Grace," he said ; "he's sure to turn up." Then came her father at ten o'clock, and, hearing Hal's tale, his wrath changed to fear that the boy had come to harm ; and when he went back to work, he said he would get a fellow-labourer who lived at Killin, and who was going home at mid-day to make inquiry, and he would come home early and look for him himself.

Grace had looked out many times since her father left. She was now standing gazing eagerly up the road, for she thought she saw the figure of a boy in the distance coming towards her. Little Tony was by her side. Her eyes were swollen with crying, and her face pale with anxiety, while she clasped her hands, and prayed God to bring home her "truant boy." She little knew that truant boy was watching her from behind the trunk of one of the trees of the wood, while he grasped a bough to keep himself from falling. Faint, cold, wet, frightened and exhausted, he was a pitiable object.

Grace saw that it was only a ploughboy coming along, and she gave a little disheartened cry, and prepared to turn into the house, when she glanced towards the wood.

"If he beats me to death, I must get in," Grant groaned to himself, and, staggering forward, came to where his sister was standing. Grace started violently: she was nervous and frightened. "Is it you? Oh, Grant, poor boy, what's wrong?" she cried. Her arms were round his neck, while she exclaimed—"Oh! I'm glad you've come, but you are wet, and you can hardly stand. Where have you been?"

"Is father in?" gasped Grant, with a sob and quivering lip.

"No, I'm all alone with Tony. Oh, Grant! tell me what's happened?"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Grant; "don't ask me, Grace. Oh! my back aches so!" Seeing that he was hardly fit to speak, and looked white and ill, Grace asked no more questions, but began to help him into the house, and then off with his

wet and dirty clothes, after which she ran and fetched his other suit, and warmed it, ready to put on. Though May time, it was cold and chill, and a raw wind was blowing.

The little girl carried his wet clothes, and put them quite out of sight in a tub, and then feeling his feet, and finding them very cold, she asked him if he would like some warm water to wash them in. With her anxious, loving eyes looking down upon her poor, dirty, miserable little brother, with his tear-stained face and scratched and bleeding feet, she looked much like his guardian angel.

"I don't know," he answered, shivering and glancing with a frightened look towards the door; "have you seen any pollice about the day?"

"Pollice?" repeated Grace. "No, they don't often pass here. Why?" But Grant did not answer, only looked thoroughly wretched.

"Poor Grant! something's wrong," she said, pitifully. "Tell me, and I'll help you if I can, and we'll ask God to help; if you'll only be sorry He will forgive you." Her sympathising tone went to his heart, and he began to cry bitterly, putting his arm on the back of another chair, and his head on his arm. For a long time he could not speak, and then his sobs choked his words as he gasped out: "I'm so wretched—all my money—and the pollice will come—Uncle will be angry—I've been on the broad road," and once or twice he sobbed "Mother." Grace could understand nothing; so, begging him not to cry, she washed his feet, which were sadly cut and scratched, and then got fresh water for his face and hands, and brushed his hair.

"Now the kettle boils, I'll give you a cup of tea



and make you some toast," she said, kindly, "for you do look as if you had not had any breakfast." Grace longed to ask him where he had been all night, and if he had spent his money; but she was afraid he would cry again, and she thought it would be best to give him something to eat first. His hand shook so, and his teeth chattered so much, though he was sitting by the fire, that he could not carry the mug steadily to his lips, and Grace was obliged to help him. When he had taken the tea and toast, he seemed a little revived; still, he did not speak, and soon his eyes drooped heavily, and he nearly fell from his chair.

"Would you like to lie down on the bed, Grantie, dear, you seem so tired, and get a little sleep?" asked his sister.

"I never went to sleep last night," moaned Grant; "I was out in the wood a good part," and he rose wearily and climbed on the bed.

"Why didn't you come home? We wanted you so much; I was so frightened, and now you've made yourself ill."

"I dursn't, I was afeard of father; but the boys made me go with them. You'll never love me any more, Gracie. I've been such a bad boy."

"I will love you: I *do* love you now more than I ever did, and Hal has been so kind helping to find you."

"Oh dear! my head!" groaned poor Grant; "it's dreadful."

"Don't talk now, then," said kind-hearted little Grace; "shut your eyes."

The advice was hardly needed; his eyes closed quickly, and in a few minutes he was sleeping heavily. Grace then covered him with a blanket,

and took Tony into the back kitchen, while she prepared some potatoes for their dinner and their father's supper. She was so thankful that her brother was home that she hardly thought of her father's possible anger. Then Grant was very ill, and perhaps that would soften his heart and keep him from flogging the poor boy, who seemed so miserable. Whatever came, the little culprit was safely asleep just *now*, and Grace knelt down at a wooden chair and thanked God for bringing him home, and asked Him to help them through that day, and to make Grant sorry if he had been naughty ; but she could not help thinking the other boys had been greatly to blame in some way.

"'Underneath are the everlasting arms,' God will take care of us, I am sure," said little Grace as she thought of these beautiful words. "His arms are so strong, it makes me feel so safe whenever I think of them."

"Gant's been a werry naughty boy : make Gacy cry," said Tony.


"No, no, please don't call him that ; he's very unhappy and tired," answered Grace.

"Un'appy and tired ?" echoed Tony ; "tell me 'bout it, Gace."

"I don't know all about it, only he's been in the dark, wet wood all night. Hark, Tony ! how it rains and the wind blows ! We're glad he's home, aren't we ?"

"Yes, me glad, but him's cryin'."

Grace darted into the kitchen as Grant gave a sharp cry, and went to his side ; but he was asleep, and after muttering as he turned round "Don't, father, I can't go to prison," he again lay still, **breathing heavily.**



"Why does he talk of the pollice and the prison?" wondered Grace; "I hope he has not been doing anything wicked," and, as a tap came at the door, she started, and hardly dared open it. But her fear quickly subsided and changed to joy as she saw Jeanie wrapped in a waterproof and with a large umbrella. "Oh! I am glad, Jeanie dear," said the child, in a low tone of gladness, as she brought her friend in and took the umbrella from her hand. "I was wishing somebody so much."

"Hal told us about Grant," said Jeanie, "and I came to see if he was home yet."

Grace pointed to the bed. "He is there, he is so tired, and I'm afraid he's ill too; but oh! I'm glad he is home."

"I am glad, too," said Jeanie, sitting down by the fire. "Mother was fidgetting about him, and she says if the rain stops she will look in, in the afternoon; for I can't stay very long, I have a message to Widow Brown. Where has he been, Gracie?"

"He didn't tell much, he seemed so wretched and frightened, and he fell asleep pretty quick. I did not like to worry him, but he's been in the wood a good while for fear of father."

Again Grant moaned, and cried out, "Don't, boys! Give me my money!" Jeanie stepped softly to the bed, and put on another blanket. "Grace dear, he is very cold, and he trembles a good deal." Grace ran as quick as she could, and brought one from upstairs, and tucked it round him. "His head is very *hot*," added Jeanie. "If he has been in the wood all night, I fear he has taken a severe cold; but let him sleep as long as

he will, and I'll ask mother to step in, in the afternoon, and see how he is."

Grace thanked her heartily, and Jeanie started on her errand during a lull in the rain. Then came Hal, and he had to hear all that Grace could tell about Grant's return, and of course he was curious to hear more than she *could* tell of what Grant had done since they saw him last.

"Those boys were at the bottom of it, I'll be bound!" exclaimed Hal, who intended to stand by Grant for his sister's sake. "You should have heard Sam this morning: he was telling some mighty bad pranks he'd been up to, but he seemed kind o' frightened about Grant, too. I believe they've been cheating him out of his money."

Hal had to leave before Grant woke, and, after dinner, Grace sat down to begin a letter to her uncle. She had promised to write as often as possible, and to tell all about herself and Grant, and therefore felt it right to mention a little of what was now taking place, touching, however, as lightly as possible on any wrongdoing. That little letter made her uncle very anxious to have both the children to stay with him and his parents for a time, and he determined to try and persuade their father to allow them to do so when an opportunity offered. For the present he saw he must wait a little.

Grant continued to sleep on heavily, occasionally starting or crying out, and falling over again, till about half-past three, when there was another knock at the door, and Mrs. MacLean came in. How glad Gracie was to see her motherly face and hear her cheerful voice! And it was delightful to the loving little girl to have such a hearty

embrace as the good woman gave her. "I am glad to hear you are such a kind wee sister," said Mrs MacLean. "The Lord bless you, child!"

She wiped away her tears as she looked round upon the little kitchen, which was in nice order and very creditable to so small a housekeeper, and then upon the "mitherless bairns." She went to the bedside to look at Grant, and, as she did so, he opened his eyes. "Where am I?" cried the child; "Oh! I thought they were draggin' me to prison."

"They're doing no such thing. Folks never take good wee boys to the prison," said Mrs. MacLean, soothingly. She felt his burning forehead, and noted the heavy eye and trembling fit that came on as he tried to raise himself.

"How are you, Grant, my poor boy?" she asked.

"Oh my head!" moaned Grant, "and my back and legs ache, and my throat is sore; but I'm not 'a *good* wee boy,'" he cried, "and I'm frightened they'll take me, because I went to the fair and—and—I can't tell; but you'll take care o' me, Mrs. MacLean, and I'll never do it again."

"You must tell me all about it in a little," she answered. "I hope it's not anything real bad you've done. How could you forget that God's eye was on you, child?"

"It was the boys!" cried Grant, excitedly, and then, moaning with pain, began to sob. Mrs. MacLean said he must talk no more then, and, to divert his thoughts, opened her bag and showed a jar of jelly and some biscuits she had brought. Tony was delighted when she gave him some, and sat quietly eating, while Grace asked Mrs. MacLean

what she should do about Grant. "Hear his hard cough!" she answered; "he is real ill, poor bairn." Jeanie said he was most of the night in the wood! "It's a pity your father makes him so afraid; but when he sees Grant ill, he'll not be hard on him, let's hope. I think he had better undress, and get to his bed at once; and I fear he will not be able to leave it for some days—it looks to me like the beginning of bad bronchitis. But trust in God, dear; He will bring good out of all that happens to those who love Him. Now, we will give the poor laddie a hot sup of gruel before he rises, while we make the bed."

Grace soon had it ready with her kind friend's aid, and then they helped Grant out of bed, and wrapped him in a dark shawl while they made the bed. It was all ready, and Mrs. MacLean was going to undress Grant, when Campbell came suddenly into the cottage.

The man who had promised to make inquiries at Killin had returned to work without having heard anything of the boy, and Campbell had set off home in some anxiety; but unfortunately had met Mrs. Fern on the road, who said, "Yer boy's home, master; I just looked in and saw him takin' his rest like a lord. Boys will tak' their ain road; they're a heap of trouble." Campbell nodded and passed on, but there was time, ere he reached home, for him to work himself into a fury against Grant for thus thwarting him and getting his own way. He broke a stick from the hedge as he strode along, and entered the cottage fully determined to give Grant the flogging he deserved. The man was a little taken aback to find Mrs. MacLean there, but was too excited to speak to her.

Giving a short nod, he turned upon Grant, who, having eaten his gruel and been wrapped in the shawl, sat by the fire. His cheeks crimsoned as his father entered, and for the moment he did not look much amiss.

"So, here ye are, are ye?" asked his father, giving him a rough shake that caused his head to throb with pain. "What have you to say for yourself, eh? Going off to the fair, and staying out all night; having a spree, and coming home to be maudled up! Take that shawl off and get up!" he said, pulling it off himself, and shaking Grant again.

"Wait," said Mrs. MacLean, coming forward, and laying her hand on his shoulder. "The lad-die's ill. Hear his story first, my gudeman."

"I'll do no such thing," answered Campbell. "He has nothing to tell but of bad ways, and he'll get his floggin' to-day."

The stick descended heavily several times. Grant roared, then screamed, and struggled, and choked, with coughing.

Grace pleaded, and then tried to throw herself between, but her father pushed her away.

The stick was descending for the sixth time, but Mrs. MacLean caught Campbell's arm. "No, no, master!" she said, putting the other round Grant. "The boy's done wrong, no doubt, but he is ill the now, and it's a shame to flog him so. Give over till he's better! The boys have been tempting him to evil, I believe."

Campbell's hand was yet on the boy, and he swung him from Mrs. MacLean's grasp to the floor, and, bringing the stick once more down upon him, he turned on his heel, saying, "Perhaps that

will learn him ! Put down my tea, Grace ; I've lost a couple of hours' work over this foolery."

Mrs. MacLean raised the writhing, terrified boy from the ground with an exclamation of indignation. His cheeks were ablaze with fever, his temples throbbing wildly.

She set him in the chair, but he could hardly support himself, and, after helping him off with his clothes, laid him warmly in bed.

While this was going on, Campbell talked on at Grant, warning him against running off again, and "putting them all about," in no gentle terms, and adding, as Grant was put into bed, that he was just shamming, and "he'd know, that he would, what the boy had been doing with himself."

Poor Grant was thoroughly exhausted and full of pain. He was, indeed, reaping the bitter fruits of thoughtlessness and waywardness. He could hardly speak, yet his father's threats drove him to try to give an account of his doings the day before. He confessed he had been to the fair, that the boys had got some money from him—that he had been shut into one of the shows till late at night, and had been frightened, and daren't come home, and had stayed in the wood till he saw Grace at the door. Campbell could hardly restrain his passion when he heard he had spent and lost his uncle's half-crown, and probably he would have thought fit to punish Grant further, but that Mrs. MacLean very coolly and quickly interfered, and said she should find out whether the boys had taken it from him, and, if so, she should give him another, and she said Grant should go to sleep now, or it would be a question of a long doctor's bill.

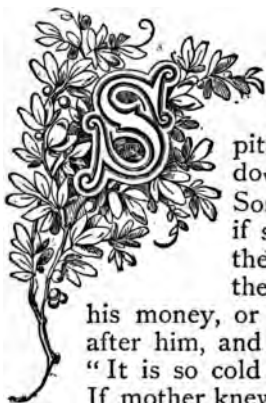
Campbell at last settled down to his tea, much to Gracie's satisfaction. Her little heart was bursting with grief. She longed to go to her Heavenly Father, and pour her troubles into His ear, but she thought it better to be quiet and help her father to his tea. He had been drinking with his comrades on account of its being fair time, and this had made him unusually excited. In the midst of his tea Hal came in, and he was excited too. He glanced towards the bed, and then at Campbell and Grace's tearful eyes, and guessed pretty nearly the truth. Grant's eyes were closed, and he breathed heavily. Lowering his voice, but speaking quickly, Hal nodded to Mrs. MacLean and said, "Them boys have been cheating him. Will Dobbs told me all about it. They made him show them his half-crown, and then 'ticed him to go to the fair, and Sam and Fern got it away, and Grant dursn't come home without it, and they got him in a show with dancing bears, and picked a man's pocket of his handkerchief, and ran away and left it with Grant, and he got shut in after the folks left; for he was afraid of the pollice, and they all made off with his money, and never knew how he got home, but Will's father said he met him about twelve in the night near the wood, and it was rainin' and blowin', and he must have been soakin' through. There!"

"Poor Grant!" sobbed Grace. "Where's the clothes he took off?" asked Mrs. MacLean, gently.

Grace went for them. They were drenched through. "Poor wee fellow! he must have suffered severely for his fault," she added. "If you're willing, Mr. Campbell, I'll stay till eight with Gracie and see how he is, for much I fear there is trouble

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SICK CHILD AND HIS LITTLE NURSE.



HE was needed. Grant passed a restless night, and towards morning became delirious. He cried out so piteously that his father came downstairs and sat beside him. Sometimes he would appear as if speaking to the boys, telling them he didn't want to go to the fair; then he would beg for his money, or imagine the policeman was after him, and then begin to cry and say, "It is so cold in the wood—Oh! so cold! If mother knew she'd take me out. Come, mother, come, and don't let father beat me. I was bad to go along with the boys, but they took my money. Oh dear! Oh dear! Father! that hurts dreadful, don't hit me again!"

Campbell was sober now, and Grant's cries were so pitiful that they touched his heart. He saw clearly the boy was very ill, and felt sorry for the hasty part he had acted the day before. But he could not bear to sit beside him and do anything

for Grant while Grace looked on, his conscience pricked him too keenly ; so he sent her upstairs to bed rather against her will, for she feared greatly her father might fall asleep and forget Grant, but she was obliged to go, after putting on another poultice, as Mrs. MacLean had directed.

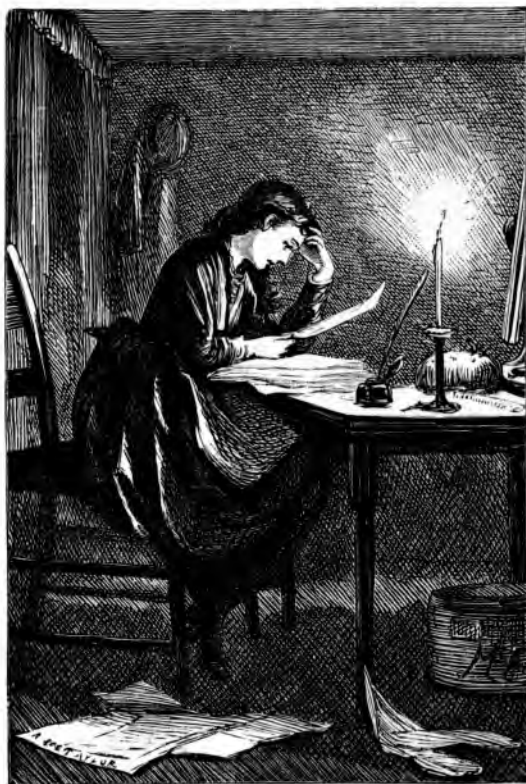
Campbell saw it was necessary to go for the doctor early in the morning, and let Mrs MacLean know that his boy was no better ; so off he trudged, leaving Grace in charge. When the doctor came he said Grant was seriously ill, though at present he could not say what form the complaint might take, whether rheumatic fever or inflammation of the lungs, but he feared bronchitis as well. When he examined his chest he saw the marks on his shoulders occasioned by the flogging, and asked what they were. Campbell was obliged to own that they were marks from the stick. The doctor shrugged his shoulders and said, " Surely the boy was too ill to be flogged yesterday ! "

Now began rather a trying time for little Grace. Tony still came day by day, and she was glad of his company ; for often she was alone with Grant, whose moans were trying to hear, as he suffered severely from rheumatism, and the fever ran very high. However, Tony was a good little fellow, and did not want much attention. Besides, his mother was very kind in coming up to help Grace to clean or wash when she was able, and Mrs. MacLean or Jeanie were in every day. There were one or two days which followed the fever, when the doctor feared Grant would not recover, for he was dreadfully weak, and could neither speak nor move, but lay as if he had hardly strength to breathe. When his father saw him in this state

he was very anxious, and showed as much affection as it was possible for one of his nature to show. He brought home pieces of beef for beef-tea, and often tried to get him to take sips of brandy or milk.

Gracie waited on her twin brother with loving care, and secretly hoped and prayed that her father might learn to love Grant better and take more interest in him, if God should spare his life. She wrote again and again to her uncle, and told him of the danger her brother was in, and by return of post he sent her five shillings to buy beef and eggs for Grant. Evidently he feared his brother-in-law might not provide all the nourishing things the little invalid should have. But Campbell would have *done* a great deal now to see Grant well and strong. He was his only boy, and, as he saw him lie so pale and still, remorse was busy. Had he done his duty by the children ? he asked himself at times. Was he not driving Grant to naughty ways by his sternness ? He hardly went so far as to answer these questions, but they would arise in his heart as he took his turn to watch by the boy's bedside at dead of night, with no sound near him but the rustling of the trees and the tick of the kitchen clock.

One evening when Grant was lying very prostrate, and poor little Grace was tired out with all her duties, Campbell returned from work at six o'clock. Mrs. MacLean had promised to come by seven, and stay the night ; meanwhile, Grace was left in charge. Her father entered the cottage gently : he never knew how he might find Grant on his return. An unusual scene met his eyes. The boy lay as he had left him, sleeping



with parted lips and marble face. By his side sat Grace, her head resting on his pillow, her eyes closed. She had fallen asleep with her text-book open on her knee. Tony was lying on the rug, asleep too, with his arms round the cat, and his rosy cheeks resting on his fat little hand. Everything was in good order: the fire burning brightly, the kettle boiling on the hob, the table set for tea, Grant's medicines standing at the bedside with milk or beef-tea; but the busy little worker was tired out, and had evidently but just fallen asleep.

Campbell stepped softly across the floor, and took off his boots; then turned and looked at the two sleepers—the one so near to death, the other worn out with loving service. Her cheek was pale and her eyes heavy, and he noticed how thin she had grown. Perhaps never in his life had he cared so much for his children as at that moment, as the thought presented itself, "What if I had to lose both?" He saw the text-book lying open on the little girl's knee, and he lifted it noiselessly to see what she had been reading. The first verse that met his eye was this, "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Then came another text as a contrast: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Campbell carried the book in his hand to the table, and, after he had infused the tea, he read the verses over and over.

"The just! I'm not one of them kind, I doubt," he thought to himself.

"You're not just! You're not just!" ticked the clock, and Campbell repeated the words over

and over involuntarily. He fidgetted on his chair, and read the second verse, "Turned into hell—that forget God," ticked the clock. "You—forget—God!" it ticked on; "*You—forget—God.*" The man looked up at the clock, and half rose to stop the pendulum. As he did so Tony opened his eyes and looked round, then rubbed them, and looked towards Grace. "Hush—h—h," he said, "Gacie's sleepin'. You mustn't wake her; me been good boy and make no noise, cause Gacie tired." At this moment Grant stirred, and though no other sound had roused her, Grace wakened instantly, and, without noticing her father, turned to her brother. His lips moved, and she poured a teaspoonful of milk into his mouth. Then she saw her father. "Oh, father, you are home, and I was asleep!" she exclaimed; "and you've been wanting tea, haven't you?"

Campbell really wanted to say something that sounded as affectionate as he felt just then, but nothing special came to his mind, so he said, "No, no, the sleep has done you good; you looked pale and tired, lassie. *I* made the tea; you come and drink a drop."

She looked so gratefully at him for the kind tone and consideration he had shown, that he drew her to him, and patted her shoulder, telling her she was a "good wee lassie."

"Why, you've my text-book, father!" she exclaimed, with delight.

"Yes, I picked it up; I was readin' those two verses." Grace looked at them. "*That* is dreadful," she said, pointing to the second one; "but oh! father, how beautiful for the path of the just, to be as the shining light till it gets to perfect day."

"Ye—es, may be," he answered, as if with indifference ; "do you think you're good enough to be one of them, Grace? I know few that is."

Grace thought a minute. "I'm not just or good of *myself*, father, not a bit ; but I know how Jesus died for me, and He was just, though I wasn't, and now I believe in Him, and God looks at Jesus and what He has done for me, and *He* doesn't see the bad things, because they are all washed away in His blood. I wish I was sure Grant knew it, too ; for oh ! father, *if* he does not get better—" Here Gracie broke down, and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Oh ! he'll get better, no fear of it ; the doctor will be in the night, I daresay, and give him something to cheer him up a bit. Don't fret, lassie !" But her father didn't eat much, and took another good look at the little text-book before he gave it back to Grace, who appeared to take no notice, only hoping that he might read more verses. When Tony saw the little girl's tears, he had jumped up and put both arms round her neck, saying, "*You* my 'ittle mother, Gacie ; you not to cry ; and we both go up to Jesus some day, and *He* won't let us fall out of the sky." Gracie smiled and wiped away her tears, and kissed Tony. He was her little comforter often now, and she was reaping the fruit of the care she had bestowed on him ; for she had taught him a little prayer, and one or two pretty hymns, and the little fellow often prattled away about the Lord Jesus and His love to little children, and often, when he had been rather naughty, would kneel down and ask Jesus to forgive him. For Tony had a quick temper, and, when he had set his mind on any-

thing, would sometimes cry for it, and persist in wanting it till Grace had to put him in the back kitchen till he promised to be good. He generally came round quickly then, and really did not give her much trouble on the whole.

Grace now prayed very often to the Lord to change her father's heart, and tried every plan to put some of the little books her uncle had given her in his way. The evening after he had looked at her text-book they were sitting together, while Grant was asleep (for her father did not like to leave her alone of a night while he was ill), and Grace brought a little book to his side : a simple little story, telling of one who knew the Saviour's love. "Hear me read a bit, father, and see if I'm getting on with my reading. Will you?" she asked; "this is a pretty wee book, and I've no one to hear me now." So he consented, and she read through the little book, and Campbell seemed really interested in the little story, at least he listened to the end quite quietly, and told Grace she read very well, and when she had a nice book she might read him a bit at times. The little girl was very pleased, and took care to leave her text-book and Bible in his way, hoping he would take them up.

Grace was very glad to have five shillings to spend on Grant, and, after asking Mrs. MacLean's advice, she spent all of it on beef and new-laid eggs, and made beef-tea and beat up eggs, so that he had nourishment constantly. The poor boy coughed almost incessantly at night, and whenever he was awake; and often little Grace was tired out. But she dearly loved her brother, and

he liked to have her near him ; and when she thought how glad her mother would be to have him cared for, it helped her on to be patient and kind, and she was often rewarded by his loving look as his eyes followed her about the room. After a week he seemed to be improving a little, and gained enough strength to move his hands, and then some days after he began to speak a little to Gracie's delight. She was specially pleased, too, that her father seemed glad, though he was rather shy of speaking to him.

But one afternoon Grant really seemed better, and began to speak about his running off to the fair. He had evidently been thinking over Grace's kindness to him, for he said suddenly, as he watched her pouring out some beef-tea for him,—

"I wish I could give you a present, Gra ; you've been awful good to me, and its made you look quite thin ; but I haven't got any money to buy you candies, those boys took it away."

"Never mind, Grant ; as long as you get well and be strong, I don't care. I daresay you're sorry about the money, but how did they get it ? Only, don't talk if it makes you cough."

"Bob asked me to let him see it when I told him I'd got a big half-crown, and said he didn't believe ; so I just took it to show, and meant to put it back ; and then they asked me to walk to Killin, and we'd be home by five ; and then they got it away, and I daren't come home without it ; and Bob bought candy and cakes for all, and they took a drop o' spirit, but I wouldn't, and they made me go to the show, and picked a man's

pocket, and ran off, and left me with his handkerchief." Here Grant paused for breath.

"Don't tell any more, Grantie, you'll cough. I know they were real bad to you. Here's your beef-tea ; it's fine the day."

He took a sip and went on. "So I daren't leave for fear of the pollice, and they locked me in a long while, without knowin' I was there, I s'pose. Oh Grace! I—I was so miserable!" and Grant fairly cried.

"Don't cry, there's a good boy. You needn't tell any more. You ran to the wood, didn't you, and wandered about. Poor Grant!" she said, climbing on the bed, and patting his arm ; "you won't go with these boys again, will you? Stay along with me and Hal ; he's a real nice boy. Promise, Grantie," she pleaded, with wistful eyes. "Remember mother wants you to be good, and keep from bad boys. You wouldn't like to go down on that broad road. *Do* listen to Jesus. He loves you."

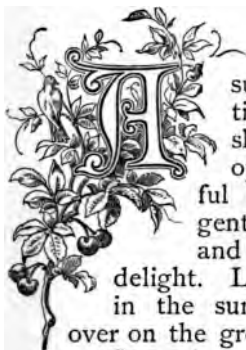
Grant could not, neither did he wish, to withstand such pleading. "I'll not go with them any more, Gracie ; they're real bad, and I never feel happy with them. I'll keep more with you and Hal. Oh dear! I was wretched in that little cave in the wood, all wet and cold. I don't think I'd prayed my little prayer for ever so many days. I mean to pray it now, if God'll help me. I know I was naughty. I wish father would forgive me ; I wouldn't run away again if he'd be kinder like," sobbed Grant. Then he began to cough, and Grace would not let him talk any more, but read to him out of one of the little books till he was quite quiet, and she told him she thought

if he told his father he was sorry he would forgive him and be kind ; and then Grant fell asleep, and Grace knelt down and cried for joy. She hardly knew why, but things seemed coming right. So she thanked her Father in heaven, who "doeth all things well."



CHAPTER XXII.

A VICTORY GAINED.



ABOUT a month after Grant began to get better, one bright sunshiny morning in the summer time, Grace decided that they should all spend an hour in the open air. It was just a delightful day: the trees were swaying gently to and fro in the breeze, and the birds seemed wild with delight. Little Tony was frisking about in the sunshine, and rolling over and over on the green by the side of the house; so Grace brought her brother his coat and cap, and told him if he would sit on the bench a little while in the warm sun, she would come soon.

A great confidence had sprung up between the brother and sister since Grant's illness, and he never seemed so contented as when talking to Gracie, or she was entering into his plans. True, he was sometimes rather impatient; but invalids when getting well are often that, and *she* had had a lesson in patience. and tried to be most gentle

and kind to her twin brother. She talked to him soothingly, as to one not yet strong, and really liked to have Grant so much under her care ; and he needed care yet, for he was far from strong. His cheeks were generally very pale, and he was thin too, and kept a short hacking cough, while the least damp or chill wind gave him fresh cold. The doctor said he ought to have a change of air, or he might never get really strong again, and some of the neighbours shook their heads and said he was turning "*consumpt*," *they* believed, and would go like his mother. One or two had told Grace this, and it had the effect of making her very anxious, and very patient and kind to Grant, and every day she looked to her Heavenly Father for help and strength to do her best to nurse her brother and be patient with him. And when we ask for daily strength, and strive in the power of *His* might, we do succeed. This bright summer morning, then, the two little boys began to play together outside, for they were good friends now, and Grace quickly finished setting the house in order ; then she thought, "What shall I take outside to do?" A smile came to her lips and a flush to her cheek, as she remembered a pretty book Jeanie had lent her to read. "I'll take that," she said to herself, and reached up to get it down from the shelf. But as she took it in her hand the smile faded, and the pleased look too, and a little voice said, "There are those socks of father's and Grant's want mending ; they'll need them to-morrow or Monday. The ones your father is wearing have a hole in them ; besides, Grant is waiting for you, and he will want you to amuse him a little. He would be so disappointed if you

read all the time, and you know when you once get interested you don't like to leave off."

Poor Gracie! The arguments were strongly against the book. She was a little undecided, however. "I can do the stockings after dinner," she said to herself.

"You will be clearing up after dinner, and you have scones to make," said the little voice. "I can read a little *first*, and then work: I get so little time to myself," she thought, with a sigh.

"Work first and *then* read," said the voice.

Grace looked lingeringly at the book. "Which will be best?" she asked herself.

"Ask your never-failing Friend to show you," said the voice.

"I will," replied little Grace, and, looking up at the bright sky, she said softly, with filling eyes, "'Teach me Thy way, O Lord!' Show me which is the best thing to do." She had no difficulty now. She closed the book and put it upon the shelf, and took out her little work-basket and the socks, and put her text-book in her pocket, and then, with a cheerful face, went out to sit on the bench. "Oh! I'm glad you're come," said Grant; "it's fine out here, and Tony is such a funny wee thing."

"What are you doing, Tony?" asked Grace.

"Me makin' your father's dinner very nicy for him to eat it *all* up," said Tony, with a business-like face, as he pounded away in an old dirty tin.

"What is it made of, Tony?" asked Grant.

"Puddin'," answered Tony.

Grant peeped in. "It's old stalks of flowers, and water, and dirt," laughed he.

"Isn't it a nicy puddin', Gace?" asked Tony, appealingly.

"Capital."

"Know 'at, Gant. Gace says it's *cappal*. Don't laugh at me!" said the little fellow, indignantly, as he set down the tin by Grace's side, and marched off to get some stones to add to the composition. He halted, however, on one leg at a short distance, and, with his head on one side, called out, "Don't eat it, Gace, and don't let Gant. Take care of it while I gone, and keep it for you father."

"We'll *promise* not to eat it," cried Grant, reassuringly, and Tony trotted off.

"Do you like mending socks, Grace?" asked Grant, watching her as she bravely crossed a great hole with the worsted.

"I like you and father to have neat socks to put on, but I don't much like working at big holes like these," she replied.

"Why do you do them, then?"

"Just because they must be done," sighed Grace.

"I should leave them, I know," said Grant, "and let them do themselves."

"Father couldn't afford to keep buying new socks," answered his little sister, gravely.

"Well, you are a very good girl, I think. I don't believe the other lassies would do it."

Grace smiled. "I want to please Jesus," she said, softly, "and I think this pleases Him. I can't do big things, and He gives me this to do."

"I don't do nothing," returned Grant.

"When you mind father, and be kind at home, I think it's a great deal."

"Well, I don't mean to go along with the rough lads again. I like keeping with you and Hal best. Ye ken, Gracie, I'd like to be going along the narrow road." Gracie's eyes danced with joy. She could hardly help putting her arms round Grant's neck. He went on: "But I want a start—to ken I'm *on* it; then 'twould be easier to go on straight. How did you *get on* the right road, Gra?" asked the little boy, as he tried to kick out the words with his feet.

"We can't get on, or keep on, of ourselves; it's Jesus who is the Way. Directly we look up to Him and believe on Him for our own Saviour, *He* puts our feet there, and when we love Him we follow Him, and He 'never forsakes,' the text says, but helps us along. Oh! there are lots of texts showing how He keeps us. See here!" and Grace fumbled for her text-book; "'My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.' Isn't that safe and beautiful?"

"It's *Jesus* does it all, then," said Grant.

"Yes, *all*," answered Grace; "He died, you know, and shed His blood, and when we believe on Him our sins are forgiven, and we start on the narrow path."

"I see, I'd like to."

"Well, tell Him so, Grantie, and He'll show you the way."

As little Grace worked away at her stocking, she was very happy. "If I had been reading we couldn't have had this nice talk," she said; and when her father asked for a fresh pair that even-

ing, she ran for them with a light step, and was rewarded by hearing him say, "Well, it's a bit of a comfort to get a clean neat pair on." He did not know how his little girl had overcome her desire to amuse herself, and had done her duty; but the Lord did know.

Before they left the garden that morning Jeanie joined them, and gave Grace some help with one or two jobs of mending. Her step was languid, and the colour quickly faded on her cheek.

"How tired you seem, Jeanie?" said Grace, lovingly.

"Yes I am," she replied, with fast-filling eyes.

"Don't you feel well? You shouldn't be troubling about my work."

"*That* don't weary me. I don't know, but sometimes I think I'm like my father was. I'm so tired of a morning I can hardly get up, and this cough troubles me, and a pain in my side. Mother is getting fidgetty; she is going to take me to the doctor's to-morrow. It's for mother I'm sorry," said Jeanie, with trembling voice. "If I were to go away, what would *she* do? *I'm* not afraid; I know God loves me."

"Oh Jeanie! it's not that. You aren't going to be so ill; the doctor will give you something to do you good, and God will take care of you."

"I know He will," replied Jeanie; "it's mother mostly that troubles me at times. Sometimes I feel much better, but other times as if I'd like to be in bed; and yet at night I can't sleep. But promise, Gracie dear, you'll not tell mother."

"No I won't," said Grace, with an anxious face. She was beginning early to carry the sorrows of others. "But I'll ask the Lord Jesus about it."

CHAPTER XXIII.

JEANIE GOES HOME.



HE doctor had not a very cheerful report to give next day when he examined Jeanie. He told her mother she needed great care, that one lung was affected, and he feared a tendency to consumption.

I cannot tell you of her poor mother's anxiety. She was sustained by her unfailing Friend, but she carried about a very sad heart, and oftentimes gazed at Jeanie as if she were a smitten flower. All she could do she did, but Jeanie did not get really stronger. Some days she seemed better, then she was quite prostrated, and the disease gained ground. She left off going to see Grace, it tired her too much, and the little girl used to come and sit with her as much as she could. Jeanie knew then that she was "going home," and had it not been for her poor, sorrow-stricken mother, would have been glad.

She trusted simply in her Saviour, and He

smoothed the path and loosened the ties of earth.

It was in October that she became worse, and the doctor told her mother that it was a very rapid case, and that she had not many weeks to live. Mrs. MacLean's patient face grew more patient and resigned ; her grey hair began to turn white ; but she never murmured. She soothed and cheered her dearly-loved child on to the end of the journey, telling her she believed she should soon follow after. She looked, indeed, like one whose "joys were all packed up and gone before," and more longingly than ever did she look forward to the time when she should see her Lord, and meet her dear ones again. Little Grace was a great comfort in these days. She used to come in so gently and help Mrs. MacLean to nurse Jeanie, while Grant played outside with Tony, for the poor mother had her work to attend to, and Jeanie needed many a little thing done for her. Grace used to bathe her face and hands, and smoothe her hair, and prepare some little dainty for her under Mrs. MacLean's superintendence, and oftentimes used to tidy up the kitchen or parlour.

The little girl loved to do it. She felt the Lord had put this little service for Him into her hands. Many a hymn and text of Scripture she read to Jeanie, and dearly both mother and daughter loved the little girl, and welcomed her most cordially to the cottage.

Jeanie sank very rapidly towards the close of her illness. She did not suffer a great deal, except from weakness, and her sweetness and patience made it no trouble to wait upon her.

Grace had been sitting with her one afternoon, reading some of her favourite passages, and one or two hymns—(Mrs. MacLean had gone out for a few minutes)—when a gentle knock came at the cottage door. Grace rose and opened it. It was Hal. This was nothing unusual, for the boy was very fond of Mrs. MacLean and Jeanie, and, since Grant's illness, had often been in and out of their house. They saw he was trying to do right, and were only too glad to encourage him ; so that he had several times taken tea at the cottage, and stayed to hear Mrs. MacLean read a chapter in the Bible.

When Jeanie turned ill Hal used to come every day and ask after her, and was very happy to join with Grace in helping Mrs. MacLean. He used to run messages for her, chop wood, draw water, or carry home the newly-ironed linen. Mrs. MacLean said she didn't know what she should do without the children ; and Hal was thankful to escape from his wretched home to the peace and quiet which reigned at the cottage. This afternoon Hal rapped at the door, and Grace opened it. "How is she?" he asked.

"Her mother thinks she is weaker to-day," replied the little girl; "but come in, Hal : only you'll be as quiet as you can, won't you?"

"Isn't there somethin' I could get doing for Mrs. MacLean?"

"I heard her say there was a parcel to go to the Manor House. Just come and sit by the fire till she comes home." Hal stepped gently in, his bare feet pattering on the floor. Jeanie smiled at him kindly, but did not speak. She looked so lovely lying there, very white, except a faint

colour on each cheek : her eyes so clear and bright, Hal thought she was very much like what an angel must be.

Gracie shook her pillows and smoothed down the sheet with her loving, willing little hands. Jeanie closed her eyes, and a tear stole down her cheek.

"Would you like to sleep, Jeanie dear? We'll be very quiet."

"Perhaps I might be able, I feel *so* tired; but my breath troubles me a good deal," she said, gently.

Grace now noticed the silent tear, and caressingly said: "I hope you're not in pain, Jeanie?"

"No, not *much*; it's just my breath. But I'm not sorry for that; it's—for—mother. I'm going quickly—home—to Jesus—my Saviour. But mother, poor mother, will be lonely. Be good to her, Gracie," and, opening her eyes, she looked at Hal; "and you, Hal, can help her so much. You haven't got a mother: be good to mine. Promise to come and see her when I'm away—away. I daresay she'll soon come too."

Poor Hal was quite overcome. That any one should ask a kindness of him who had so often been blamed for mischief was a new and strange thing. He drew the back of his hand across his eyes. "If she'll let me come, I'd just like fine," he answered; "I'd chop wood or run for her as much as I can. I wish I had a mother like her, that I do," he blurted out.

"Thank you, Hal; and I'll thank you again when I see you in heaven. You must come too. Jesus will bring you. Don't cry, Gracie; I know you will comfort my mother—she loves you. Oh

dear! I'm *so very* tired," and Jeanie closed her eyes, but a violent fit of coughing, which frightened the children, prevented her from resting. When it was over she was quite exhausted, and Gracie gave her a soothing draught as she was ordered. Then Jeanie fell into a quiet sleep, and the two children sat and whispered together in the twilight. "She doesn't seem frightened to die," said Hal.

"She is going home to Jesus," replied little Grace. "Oh! how good of Him to die for us and wash us from our sins, else we could never get there."

"I wish *mine* was all gone, but there's such a heap, and I keep having mind o' them—things I did long ago."

"'But the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin,'" answered Grace.

"If I knew it was for me."

"Ah! I said that to uncle, and he asked me if I was one who had no strength—a sinner. If so it *was* for me, 'cause Jesus says He died for *sinner*s."

"I know I'm an awful sinner," said Hal, bluntly.

"Then He died for you. Do trust him, Hal. Just believe what He says."

"Of course. I s'pose I *ought*," replied the boy; "if *He* says it. I never saw it that way before. It would be a shame not to believe *Him*. But it just seems too good for the likes o' me."

Mrs. MacLean entered just then, and gazed at the two children sitting so still in the firelight, and then at her dying child. She did not know till *then* how near to the parting she had come; but the pale still form and the heavenly calm of the

young girl's face, smote a chill to the mother's heart. For a moment she thought she was gone ; then, noticing her faint, quick breathing, she came close to the bed and murmured : " Mither's ain lamb. My bonnie Jeanie, He has set His mark upon ye. I canna keep ye. Let the blessed Lord take His ain. Mither'll not greet long ; her treasures are all away—all gone before."

Next morning, when little Grace hurried down to hear how Jeanie was, she halted at the door. She felt she could not rap, so she gently turned the handle and entered the little kitchen. There, by the fire in her arm-chair, sat the mother—her sweet face a little sweeter than usual, and her eyes more sad, more wistful. The Bible was on her knee, and when Gracie entered she beckoned her to come near. Putting her arms round the little girl, she pointed to the bed. A curtain was partly drawn across. " My lassie's away," she said ; " the Lord took her before sunrise this morning : His will be done." And then, with Gracie on her knee, and the little girl's arms round her neck, she wept such tears as she had not shed before.

A month after Jeanie's death, quite a change took place amongst the children of our story. Mr. Hunter, the principal shopkeeper in the village, had been looking out for a message boy, one to sweep the shop and make himself generally useful, and through his friend, Mrs. MacLean, had heard of Hal ; and, after inquiring about him, had obtained his father's consent for Hal to enter his employment. Hal was very proud, and determined to try his best to get on and do right, and indeed he *was* striving hard. He had much to

stand from his old companions ; but the boy showed real moral courage in the way he withstood their temptations, and kept true to Gracie and Mrs. MacLean. He had much, too, to contend with in his home : his father took no interest in him, and was often absent on drunken sprees. So it happened that as Mrs. MacLean was very lonely of a winter's night since Jeanie's death, and the boy shrank from leaving her fireside, where he ever had a welcome seat, that she proposed he should try and get his father's leave to stay with her for a time, and sleep in a little press bed in the lobby. Hal had not much difficulty in getting leave, and was thankful to put his five shillings of a Saturday night into Mrs. MacLean's hands, while she took an interest in trying to get him some decent clothes.

And now Hal had a good chance. He had some one to help him on with his reading and writing, and, above all, to endeavour to help him along that narrow path on which he had so lately started. And Mrs. MacLean found a comfort in the lad, for he tried to fulfil his promise to Jeanie to be good to her, and in the long winter evenings she did not feel so lonely as she might have done had it not been for Hal.



CHAPTER XXIV.

HAPPY TIMES.



RA-CIE!" cried some one from behind the hedge in front of Campbell's cottage one bright morning in November. Gracie was busy hanging a few little articles of clothing out to dry on their little green, and Tony was handing her the pins to fasten them with. "I'se very clebber," said Tony, with a satisfied air.

"So you are. I don't know what I'd do without my wee boy," answered Grace, with a smile.

"You'd just die," replied Tony, with a mournful air.

"Gra-cie," sounded from the garden gate. Grace stopped in her work, wiped her hands on her pinafore, and ran to see who it was—Tony following at her heels.

"Oh, Hal! it's you? Where are you going?"

"Up to the mill on a message. I mustn't stop

more than a minute: I've to be back by eleven to Mr. Hunter with an answer."

Hal looked neat and clean, and very happy. "How do you get on?" asked Grace.

"Oh! first-rate. I like it fine; and, now Mrs. MacLean lets me put up with her, I feel quite different—as if I was gettin' on, and might some day be a decent fellow."

"Do you remember to do as we said?" asked Grace, rather timidly. "About asking God's help?"

"Yes I do. I guess that's why I get along like this. It must be Him that's done it all, and I always remember your uncle's wee prayer, 'Teach me Thy way, O Lord!'"

"And Jesus is God's way, isn't He?" replied the little girl.

"Yes, Mrs. MacLean says He must be the First and the Last."

"I've something to tell you," said Grace. "What do you think? Uncle is coming again, and I believe it's to take us to stay at grandmother's for a month or two. He's been writing to father; and Grant's cough does not go away;—so I think father'll let us, because he's got work at Farlich, and it's twelve miles away; so he'll have to stay there for a while, and I believe he will be glad to have us safe away. Won't it be nice?"

Hal looked rather doleful. "I should feel kind o' sorry to miss you, but you'd come back, and it would do Grant good, for he looks queer, and I've got Mrs. MacLean, and Willie Brown's turning out a real nice wee chap."

"You mustn't stay now," said Grace; "but come in to-night, and we can talk about it."

"All right ; and I'll run a mile to make up for waiting. Good-bye !" cried the boy, running off ; and Gracie, watching him as long as she could, said to herself : "What a different boy Hal is from what he was ! I'm glad God sent uncle here." Then she went back to her work.

Grant was at the school again, but he could only go on fine days ; for his cough was troubling him at times, and he easily took fresh cold. The doctor said he must go away for a change, and his uncle wrote to ask both the children to stay with their grandmother, so that Campbell, who had got two months' work in a wood some distance off, could hardly refuse. He felt differently from what he had done. Grant's illness had made a change in him as well as the boy. Grant had not the same high, wild spirit, for he had never regained his full health, and his father had less cause for complaint, and was more careful over his own temper. Besides, Grant really tried to do right, and his father began to be more fond of the boy. It was Grant who, reminded often by Grace, brought him his warm slippers of a night, and who chopped the wood to spare him when tired, and who in his spare moments, with Gracie's help, knitted his father a pair of socks ; and Campbell, seeing Gracie's loving, gentle ways, was drawn to listen to her from time to time when she read a few verses in the Bible with Grant, or from one of the pretty little books her uncle sent. It all had more effect upon him than one might at first suppose, for he thought there "must be something in it all," if it made the children so peaceable and happy.

So in December the little cottage was let to

Mrs. Todd to take care of for a little while, and she was glad of the change ; while Nancy, next door, promised to look after Tony in the day-time.

Oh ! how happy and delighted the children were to go the long journey with their uncle ! How pleased he was to have them, and how the old folks cried for joy at seeing their little grandchildren !—their “ poor Grace’s twin bairns.” Grandmother hugged little Grace till the child could hardly breathe, and began almost immediately to prepare a cough-mixture for Grant. Grandfather had his little lassie sit by him at meal-time, and could hardly make enough of her. This was all new to the children. They had been so unused to be made much of, or to be petted, that they hardly knew what to make of it, though Grant was supremely happy, and Grace’s loving heart responded to it all.

“ Well, children, is it as good to come to grandfather’s as you imagined ? ” asked their uncle, smiling. Grace was sitting on a little stool at her grandmother’s feet by the fire, with her hand slipped into that of the old lady’s, while she told her how she and Grant lived at the cottage, and about little Tony and the MacLeans. And Grant was busy examining a model ship belonging to his grandfather which stood on the bureau, and which Mr. Grant had made when a boy. When their uncle spoke they both looked up with a smile, and “ A great deal better ” burst from both of them at once.

That night her grandmother took Gracie into a little bedroom, and, wiping her spectacles, she said, “ This was your mother’s room, Grace ; she slept here, and we always keep it so. You shall

have it now : you'll like to be in her little room. The sun shines in pleasantly in the morning, and I shall almost feel as if I had her back again."

Grace's tears flowed fast at the remembrance of her mother, and she cried out, "Oh, grandmother! how she'd have liked to be with us!"

"So she would, dear; but she'll be glad if she knows you are here comforting your old granny."

And little Grace did try and comfort her. She generally spread sunshine where she went, and her grandmother soon loved her dearly.

It was a great treat to the little girl to win her pleased smile when she found the kitchen fire lighted in the morning, and the table spread and the toast made. Indeed, she began to wonder, after a little, what she would do when Gracie left. Uncle George wished them both to go to school while there; so they attended regularly every day, and, with him to help them on with lessons, they made good progress. Of course there was a holiday every week, and the hours were not long, so there was time to "help grandmother," and to play in the pretty little garden, and to go some nice excursions with Uncle George. Grant took to hoeing and weeding, and tried hard to be of use in the garden, and soon the colour came back to his cheek and his spirits returned, but he never forgot the lessons he learned in his illness, and, whenever he felt inclined to be cross or impatient with Grace, he had but to look in her face and remember her loving care over him through that dreary time, and the smile came back to his lip, and his temper was over.

All beneath that little roof loved the Lord, and thus they were enabled to lead the children on in

the narrow path on which they had started. Gracie's text-book was always precious to her. "You don't know how often it has helped me, uncle," she said.

"Helped you to do what?" he asked.

"To—look up to Jesus, and keep down the wrong feelings," she said, with fast-filling eyes.

Their father was detained on work away from the cottage for four months. He had found a "good job," and was unwilling to give it up; so the children stayed on, and their grandparents and uncle felt it harder than ever to part with them, and begged their father to let them remain. Soon they heard that Campbell was going to be married again, and, after coming over to see the children, he gave leave for them to stay on for the present. And so they did, and grew up loving and beloved. Grace used to write often to her father, and he always seemed to want her back; still he did not take her away, till one day Grace heard there was sickness at the cottage, and then she went for a time, and her visit was productive of real good; and she saw her old friends Mrs. MacLean, Hal, and Tony, and had a great rejoicing over them. Mrs. MacLean was leaning now on the arm of the tall, strong lad that Hal had grown, and he was a real comfort to her in her declining years.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."



